

THE HONOR OF HIS HOUSE

ANDREW SOUTAR

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BY
ANDREW SOUTAR]



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CHARITY CORNER

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THE HONOR OF HIS HOUSE

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

THE HOPE OF THE FAMILY

IN the first place, I plead for the woman in this story—the woman who erred. She was just an ordinary woman, without much time for leisure or cultivation; but there was a desire for development. She had ideals, as all women have, no matter what their station in life, but her ideals were not clearly definable; she was ambitious without having any avowed objective. Her greatest need was sympathy. The craving for sympathy overwhelmed her; the longing for sanctuary from what she believed to be the oppressive was too insistent to give the more rational faculties an opportunity to exert themselves and save her. The sanctuary she sought has been found by thousands of misunderstood women—and the world is full of that class; but in her case there was Interposition—the sanctuary was denied.

In the second place, I plead in behalf of the man,

whose line of conduct may meet with the criticism, if not the stern disapproval, of many. He is not advanced as a martyr, as a Quixote, as a Galahad, or anything very ethereal; it is not suggested that he was so broad-minded that all the rest of the world was cramped and crushed by comparison. But if it is to be argued that his line of action was irrational, it cannot be advanced that it was pseudo-heroic.

Among my notes on the character of Robert MacWhinnie, the man on whom the burden of the woman fell, I find that I have written this:

"To die for another is not the sublimest form of self-sacrifice: the giving up of breath is not all that is implied in that most beautiful expression of Christian thought—'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' "

There may be circumstances, as in the case of Robert MacWhinnie, whose life story is here set forth, when to go on living for others requires greater courage than to die for them. Perhaps the Reward is greater.

As I write, I have before me a mind-picture of Robert MacWhinnie as I knew him. He was the kind of man to whom one looks, intuitively, to bear the burdens of other people—strong-featured and yet wondrously tender in expression; almost before he reached his twenties his temples were grayed; the eyes showed the insatiable ambition of the man; the inexpressible softness of the voice was evidence of the absence of ambition's usual concomitant—pragmatism. Nature had endowed him with great physical strength, else he might never have achieved the prodi-

gious tasks to which he set his hand. When he was a boy his hair was deep brown in color, somewhat thin, always untidy; in manhood his face was kept smooth, so that the strong lines of the mouth were probably accentuated. Had there been any pronounced weakness in his character, he would never have survived the prejudices in his favor as a boy, for always he was hailed as the clever one of the family, the one on whom the hopes of the MacWhinnies were based. The family came to lean on him.

The MacWhinnies—Donald and his wife and five children—came south from the banks of the Clyde when the youngest member of the family was four years of age. They came down the North Sea in a cargo-boat, that being the cheapest form of travel, and when they disembarked at Rotherhithe the wealth of Donald MacWhinnie was twenty pounds in gold, and the most cherished of his prejudices a deep-seated contempt for the Sassenach. The MacWhinnies were friendless when they arrived; they came without letters of recommendation—without the backing of sufficient influence to gain the father a private interview with the meanest foreman of the meanest ironworks on the Thames; they came without any prospect of doing better than in Ballyhoustie, where, at least, they had the sympathy of accent. The natural question is: Why did the MacWhinnies, having no prospects, come to England? And the only reply is another question: Why do Scotsmen leave their native country?

The cargo-boat reached the Thames an hour before daybreak, and such was the amazing industry of Donald MacWhinnie and his wife that before night-

fall the family was occupying half a furnished house in Rotherhithe. They might have been comfortably installed by midday, but for the innate caution of Donald and an unfortunate sixpence which the landlord of the house insisted on having as part of the rent, and which Donald insisted on denouncing as extortionate. At five o'clock the following morning Jean, the second child and only daughter, brewed a pot of tea for her father by holding a can of water over a gas-jet. The little man—Donald was very short of stature—watched the girl with admiring eyes as she moved briskly about the "foreign hoose," as she called it.

"Jean, ma bonnie lass," he said to her, as he laced his boots, "dinna let y'r mither worrit; and if th' ladies at the door should ca' ye 'Scotty,' tak' nae heed."

Jean was thirteen years of age; she could look twenty on occasions, and this was one of them.

"They'll no ca' me 'Scotty' twice, faither. . . . When'll ye be back?"

"Six to-night, as like as not."

"The man!" Jean fetched a deep sigh of well-feigned wonder. "Ye talk as though ye had the wor-r-k to gae tae."

"I didna larn ma trade on the Clyde for naethin'." He stamped his toes well into his boots and braced his shoulders with a flourish. Jean watched him closely.

"Ye're awf'y conceited, faither."

"Hae I nowt tae be conceited aboot, Jean?" he asked. "Did ye ever know y'r faither beaten?"

Jean brushed the wisps of brown hair from the corners of her eyes, and raised her face to be kissed.

At six-thirty Donald MacWhinnie was leaning against the jamb of an engine-room door. His small eyes, looking from under a bush of eyebrows, were twinkling contemptuously; the short, stubby beard seemed to enjoy the caress of the fingers. Inside, half a dozen engineers were cursing the stubbornness of a silent donkey-engine. The foreman turned a grease-splashed face in Donald's direction, and was obviously grateful for the timely appearance of something on which he could expend a little of the pent-up fury with which he was consumed. Donald merely smiled at the flow of invective; he didn't budge.

"It's an engineer ye want," said Donald, infusing reproach into his voice. "An' I'm looking for a job."

The foreman cast some bitter aspersions on the land and race to which Donald belonged, and, having done what he believed to be his duty in that direction, inquired of the little man if he knew anything about donkey-engines.

"I've built them," said Donald—"hundreds of them."

"Take your coat off," said the foreman by way of invitation.

Donald removed his coat and approached the sullen engine.

"I served ma trade on the Clyde," he said proudly; then, surveying those standing around: "Wull ye get rid o' yer friends here and let me have a couple o' laborers?"

Within half an hour the engine was running freely,

and Donald MacWhinnie was standing at a lathe in the ironworks of Drender, Masters and Co. He remained a servant of the company until those with whom he had labored on the Clyde were mere memories. He never attained greater prominence in the eyes of his masters than "the man who stepped in at the right moment to correct the faults of half a dozen engineers"; he derived no greater joy from the record of personal achievement than the thrill which came, even in his declining years, of the reminiscent: "Did ye ever hear o' the first day I cam' to Drender's, an' th' donkey-engine that . . ." But he brought up his family step by step, and the romance—or tragedy—that was destined to weave its way through the history of the MacWhinnies did not owe its inception to any recognized flaw in the code by which he governed and was governed.

The early days were hard to fight through, and, to be generous, one may ascribe the narrowness of outlook, the smallness of the point of view, the—the selfishness of later days, to those early struggles. Certainly, Mrs. MacWhinnie never forgot what she had been through; never—not even when affluence became the portion of the family through the genius of Robert, the second son—would she consent to live in the present; the memories of hoarding and scraping when the children were young refused to be eradicated by the knowledge of acquired wealth—and the disposition to hoard and scrape and keep at bay those who, she argued, would not have "spiered" her in the beginning, clung to her to the very end. Donald, the father, was more philosophic, and although he would

never abate his claim to having inspired the genius of Robert, he was content to take what the genius of Robert brought him, and thank God for it.

It was in accordance with tradition that the hopes of the MacWhinnies came to be reposed in Robert. The head of the house having established himself in the firm of Drender, Masters and Co., his boys followed into the works as a natural sequence. Thomas, the eldest son, a moody, unsociable fellow, with a fondness for trying to understand literature that was not rightly understood by those who wrote it, was a fitter's laborer. James, the third son, went into the offices as a clerk; David, the youngest, was a boy about the works, with a promise that one day he should be put on a lathe like his father. Robert MacWhinnie, the second son, attracted the attention of Mr. John Drender from the very first. He summoned the father to his private office.

"MacWhinnie," he said, "that boy of yours—Robert—he's worth looking after."

The little man nodded in the manner of one who gives thanks for nothing.

"I ken that weel, Mr. Drender—he's a son o' his faither."

"A remarkably intelligent boy," said the ironmaster, ignoring the turning of the phrase. "And if I were you I should give him every encouragement."

MacWhinnie struck an attitude.

"His grandfaither—my faither—laid the keel of the finest boat that ever left the Clyde."

"He's much too clever to be at the beck and call of

second-class engineers in the shop, MacWhinnie. You should apprentice him."

"I'm no an ironmaster."

"And he should be given an opportunity to attend night-schools, so that he might benefit from the wisdom of those who are most likely to help him."

"That costs money, Mr. Drender, and I'm still at the lathe."

"If you're a true Scot, MacWhinnie, you won't ask the assistance of outsiders to give your boy the chance he deserves."

Donald inflated his lungs and dared to scowl.

"It wull be time, when I ask it, sir, to question my nationality."

"Very well," said Mr. Drender. "Do your best for the boy; he'll repay you."

And that night, after the family had retired, Donald MacWhinnie and his wife discussed the future of Robert, the second son. They decided that he should have all the assistance the other members of the family could give him. They were satisfied in their hearts that he would justify the sacrifices to be made in his behalf. It would mean a little more scraping, and the other sons would have to subordinate their ambitions to those of Robert. These two parents approached their subject with the inborn deliberateness that is peculiarly Scottish; they argued and reasoned and asked God's blessing on their decision; and in the end Mrs. MacWhinnie said, with a sigh that carried her over the intervening distance to her native Ballyhoustie:

"Donald, if it's a' for the best, so be it; but some-

times I wonder if bairns are the blessin' some wad hae ye believe. Ye gae through the Valley o' the Shadow to bring them into the wor-rld, ye wor-rk and ye slave for them when they're bairns, and when they're growed up they gae awa'—the lassie wi' th' first laddie that sets his cap at her, an' th' laddie wi' th' first pair o' blue een that looks at him."

And Donald stroked the ends of his reddish-gray beard and said:

"Mebbe, Martha, lass; but wull ye tell me how much has a parent a *richt* to expect frae her bairns?"

CHAPTER II

THE MACWHINNIE STRAIN

THE romance of Robert, the second son of Donald MacWhinnie, is not the romance of the boy who commences life with every conceivable handicap. Considering the environment of the MacWhinnie family, and the tendencies of the age at that time, it may be said, without denying him full credit for all that he achieved, that he started on the long road to greatness with everything in his favor. In the first place, he was a MacWhinnie, and Donald, his father, never lost an opportunity to impress on the young man's mind the incalculableness of that asset. Robert was eighteen years of age when his little father took him aside to speak with pride of the MacWhinnies who had gone before. By this time the family was comfortably settled in a comfortably furnished home overlooking the river. Like most Scots, Donald had some sense of the dramatic. He knew how to obtain the greatest effect by the subtle arrangement of simple episode, and so, in seeking to impress his second son with the importance of the MacWhinnie line, he commenced with a little word-picture of the scene at Rotherhithe that morning when Robert and his brothers and sister disembarked from the cargo-boat.

"Some men," said the little man, resting his hands on his son's shoulders, "would hae been dismayed because there was nae welcome for them. We'd on'y twenty pounds amang us; but we had brains—at least, one of us had. But what was more valuable than onything was the knowledge that, not so many years before, the name of Angus MacWhinnie was always mentioned when a boat crossed the Clyde. It's a gran' thing, Robert, to be able to say to the wor-rl'd that one o' your forebears did something for it for which the world ought to be eternally grateful. The fact that Donald MacWhinnie, your faither, is just an engineer amang engineers, can't rob ye o' the glory o' being the great-grandson of Angus MacWhinnie, the finest man that ever crossed the Border. It doesna concern me a bit that Angus MacWhinnie's family left nae mair than was requisite to bury them—and I dinna suppose it disturbs them noo. They were a gran' family, wi' just one weakness, which those that cam' after endeavored to eradicate from the race. Sometimes I feel awf'y ashamed of that weakness, but the years have softened the blow. Angus MacWhinnie and his brithers took more money out o' the Clyde than any firm I can think of, and just because of that weakness of theirs they got rid of it. It was always said of the MacWhinnies that in every family there was one fool, one who had no richt to be called a true Scot, one who would gae out o' his way on some mad enterprise to help one who was nae mair than a stranger to him. Blood is thicker than water, Robert. Dinna forget that. And charity begins in y'r ain hame, amang those who hae suffered and worked for

ye. It was Angus MacWhinnie who went back on his breeding, and poured his hard-earned money into the coffers of a meeserable little state away on the Pacific somewhere. I've ne'er ta'en the trouble to find out if the state is on the map, or if they ever thanked Angus MacWhinnie for ignoring the just claims of those who were bound to come after him. It might hae been a gran' thing to do, but it wasna Scottish. Up in my oak locker ye'll find a piece o' parchment, and a medal wi' a couple o' ribbons tied tae it. They represent the gratitude of the little state. That's a' the MacWhinnies got out o' it. Mind ye, it's something to be proud of—to feel that ye might meet a royal personage driving through the streets in all his pomp and vanity, and be able to say, 'If it hadna been for the MacWhinnies ye might be standing at an old-fashioned lathe in an engineer's shop.' Ye'll be going out into the world before long, Robert, an' th' greatness o' th' MacWhinnies o' the past should be a spur. When onybody mentions the Clyde, up ye jump an' say, 'I'm a MacWhinnie.' There'll be nae need to say vera much about your faither. Remember, too, that we hae eradicated that weakness of which I spoke a minute ago, and that the MacWhinnies, no matter what their circumstances, are chieils amang men. Be just to yersel' and your family, and ye'll be just to your fellows outside the house. Sin' Angus MacWhinnie made a fule of himsel' there has been nae record against the name of which ony o' us need be ashamed. Honor is a gran' word, Robert, and 'Honor First' has been the motto of the MacWhinnies frae the time when the first MacWhinnie is mentioned in history."

Which was a great deal for a man like Donald MacWhinnie to say, but no one could have been more appreciative of the opportunity of saying it.

Then, again, Robert, the hope of the family, had the assistance of his brothers and his sister in preparing for his long journey to greatness. Perhaps the little sacrifices which they were called on to make were impregnated with selfishness. Bluntly—Jean must not be included in this, for her love for her brother Robert was very near to idolatry, as was his for her—bluntly, the elder brother, Thomas, and the younger brothers, James and David, contributed to the advancement of Robert in the spirit of those who finance a prodigy—in the hope and belief that the investment would show a handsome profit in the end. There was no suspicion of jealousy in the minds of the other boys. From the first they were ready to admit that Robert had the brains of the family. Even Thomas, the eldest son, showed no resentment at being passed over, and this is all the more remarkable from the fact that he had imbibed the teachings of the acknowledged authorities on Socialism. A brooding, sullen fellow was Thomas, who never gave any sign that he would rise above the comparative ignominy of being an unskilled laborer. He was twenty-one when Robert entered upon his eighteenth year. The other boys were aged thirteen and eleven respectively.

The word "sacrifice" may strike one as being rather strained in the circumstances, because the members of this family had so little to sacrifice. Still, it is only fair to assume that they relinquished any ambition that they might have had when they combined

to give Robert the great chance. Again, there were night-school fees to be paid, and in order to attend demonstrations and lectures it was necessary that Robert should be clad a little above his station. It was during these studies that the beautiful love of Jean for her brother was most exemplified. The little girl with wispy brown hair and an accent that reminded one of the sharp edges of a broken flint had developed into a handsome woman of twenty, and the accent had died gradually away until only the faintest burr remained. While there had never been any rupture within the family circle, it was only in Robert that Jean found the sympathy for which she hungered, and the encouraging of his hopes was the swelling of her own. Contrary to the usual condition of things when there is only one girl child in the family, there was a pitiable lack of understanding between Mrs. MacWhinnie and her daughter. It was in her sons that Mrs. MacWhinnie lived; she seemed unable to forgive Jean for growing up without encountering the hardships which she herself had been compelled to face. Jean, she appeared to think, had in some degree drifted from the family by reason of her lack of accent and her tendency to appreciate and assimilate English customs.

In the circumstances, then, the great love that existed between Jean and Robert was not surprising. She was a clever, thoughtful girl. Robert used to say that, had she been a boy, the hopes of the MacWhinnies could never have been misplaced. These two studied together—or, rather, Robert was never able to concentrate his thoughts on his work unless

Jean were on the other side of the table. She read to him; she prepared his papers; the pencils were always sharpened by her; pens were never out of place when he needed them. His desk, in the top back room, was a model of preparedness. And his creature comforts, too, were studied by her. Quietly, unostentatiously, she performed for him a thousand and one little functions that made life all the smoother for him. There were many little dishes which only he could appreciate; it was Jean who prepared them. He had many moods, which sometimes came perilously near to disturbing the serenity of the household, but Jean always understood them and was ready with an excuse. It was to Jean that Robert outlined his ambitions, and those hours when they sat together in the top back room, one on each side of the table, and he allowed his imagination to carry him far afield—they were the happiest hours of Jean's life.

There was an atmosphere of delightful tranquillity in that top back room, with its gently sloping ceiling and broad roof window that took in sky and river. The furnishing was of the simplest, but the touch of the sympathetic woman was on everything. Jean had a pronounced sense of the artistic, although it was only in Robert's room that she was allowed to exercise it. Always there were flowers, but the colors were never out of harmony with the fixtures; they were part of the tranquillity, as it were. No matter how fatiguing the day had been, Robert found rest in the little room; no matter how disturbed his mind had been by human or other elements, there was always a soothing influence the moment he crossed the threshold

and came to rest on the ottoman near the window, or the cavernous basket chair at the fireplace. The most even-tempered of men are not without their moments of bitterness when the spirit of retaliation cries insistently for expression; but in the corner near the window, with Jean opposite him, and the low, pathetic calling of the steamers in his ears, the bitterness was forgotten; her gentle, "Let's be charitable, Rob," softened his thoughts of those who had affronted, and in a little while brother and sister had soared high above the turmoil of the river and the city beyond, and were resting on the silver turrets of their castles in the clouds. When the knots of the engineering problems refused to be undone at the square deal table in the middle of the room, the two closed the books, and stole into the corner—"to give the mind a bit rest," as she said coaxingly. It was Jean who christened the alcove "Charity Corner," following that oft-repeated plea of hers, "Let's be charitable," and his cheery response: "Ay, Jean, for there's awf'y little charity in the world outside."

In the days of sadness that were to come—when the burden he had taken on his broad shoulders weighed him down until his heart was nigh to bursting—the memory of those hours in "Charity Corner" came like an invisible hand to soothe him in his grief. . . . Her elbows rested on the table, her chin was supported by her hands, her big, encouraging eyes were dwelling lovingly on his face.

"Jean," he would say, breaking off from his studies to grasp her hand across the table, "it's tough work, but I'll never give in."

"'Deed, no, Robert. It's not like you even to talk of giving in."

"I'm going to win, Jean."

"Who could doubt it?"

"And half the credit will be yours. I could never have done what I have if it hadn't been for you."

"And now you're hawering, Robert."

"It's true, Jean."

And then that oft-repeated cry of his when, in imagination, he had completed some stupendous feat of engineering skill that would startle the world: "Jean, you do believe in me, don't you?" And her tender, "Ay, Rob, I do."

CHAPTER III

THE MEETING WITH MARGARET DRENDER

SMILE indulgently on those cold cynics who sneer at the suggestion of love at first sight, who urge that it is but the folly of the immature. Robert MacWhinnie fell in love the first time his eyes rested on Margaret Drender, the daughter of the principal in the firm of Drender, Masters and Co., and the story of the love, the wooing, serves to emphasize the argument that when he went out into the world to make the fortunes of the MacWhinnies he went under the most inspiring of conditions. It came to him, that love, in a wave that enveloped him, uplifting even as it enveloped. Before, the road ahead was cast about with stones; there were pits to be crossed, hills to traverse, and the only incentive was the joy of realizing the hopes of those who had pinned their faith to the natural gifts that had been given him. This love inspired him as nothing else had done; the long road caught the rays of the sun, the pits were blotted out, the hills were made to appear as ant-heaps.

The two met, for the first time, in Mr. Drender's study, whither Robert had been invited by the iron-master to elucidate the plans of an invention on which the young man had labored many months. Mr. Dren-

der himself had shown Robert a great deal more sympathy than he gained at home, but while encouraging him to prosecute his studies with zeal and ambition, he had never hesitated to play the part of critic. On this night, when Robert was admitted into the privacy of his employer's house, he had dressed himself with scrupulous care; Jean, with the fussiness of a valet, superintended the setting of his necktie, the hang of his coat, the gleam of his shoes. The plans were carried in a leathern wallet, and his air was that of a man who has mastered at least one of the problems of the age. Jean, reading him as easily as she would an open book, and fearing for his peace of mind if Mr. Drender should overthrow his high spirit by curt and ill-considered phrase, sought rightly to prepare him for the interview.

"They tell me, Robert, that he's terribly short with his words, but he means well. Take his 'yes' as a 'no,' and his frown as a smile, and he'll think the more of you for it. Some men, Robert"—and she shook her brown head so sagely that he laughed outright and pinched her cheeks—"some men are like wee dogs—they bark an awfu' lot to hide their smallness."

This first visit to Mr. Drender's house, "Jarrow-side," had been freely discussed in the MacWhinnie household. Thomas, the surly, had said: "Don't get it into your head, Rob, that he wants to make a friend of you. Capital never stoops to pick up nothing." And Mrs. MacWhinnie had prophesied a hundred times in as many minutes that John Drender meant to sap her boy's brains, then fling him aside as so

many of the MacWhinnies had been thrown by those more cunning than themselves. . . .

Robert accepted their warnings and forebodings with customary good humor, and left with them an impression that he was quite capable of looking after himself, although he wasn't likely to lose his balance because of the consideration of Mr. Drender. Only to Jean did he betray his elation.

"Jean, girl, this is the beginning," he told her, his cheeks glowing like a schoolboy's. "Mr. Drender isn't the man to waste his sympathies. I believe he means to give me the chance I want."

And as she gave his clothes a final survey Jean replied, with native caution:

"Just steady yourself, Rob. Keep your feet firmly on the ground, and your head'll no be in danger of flying away."

"Yes, yes, Jean," he said impatiently; "but you know that I only need the chance, and nothing will hold me back."

"Nothing will ever hold you back, Rob," she said admiringly. "You'll make a chance, even if Mr. Drender doesn't feel disposed to give you one."

He kissed her impulsively.

"A few more years, Jean," he cried gayly, "and you and I will be making things hum. There never was a sister like you. If this invention should come to anything——"

She turned him round that she might note his waistline.

"Awa' wi' ye!" she laughed. "Ye're getting as tire-

some as father with your inventions—only father's are all on paper and easily burned."

He walked through Rotherhithe with his head erect and his hopes higher than the tallest mast on the river. "Jarrowside" lay well back from the water's edge, and the grounds were so well wooded that, in a district where beauty of landscape had long since been sacrificed to the needs of commerce, they seemed utterly incongruous.

Much of Robert's enthusiasm left him as the servant opened the hall door; he was almost apologetic in mien as he hesitated on the threshold of the study, and only feebly returned the gruff welcome of the old Northumbrian. It was not the burly figure of the ironmaster, at the writing-desk, that unnerved him. Margaret Drender was seated on the top of a library ladder. She had been rummaging among the shelves for the volume required by her father, and it seemed to Robert, as for a moment he gazed at her, that a giant book had suddenly opened to show him a picture.

"Come in, MacWhinnie," Mr. Drender said, glancing over his shoulder. "Margaret, hinny, move the reading-lamp so that Mr. MacWhinnie may be seated at the table near me. . . . My daughter" (to Robert). "Margaret, you've heard me mention the name of this young man."

Nervously Robert held out his hand, fearful that he was taking an unconscionable liberty. She placed her hand in his, and without any sign of embarrassment allowed her dark eyes to rest on him.

"Father has often mentioned your name," she said, smiling encouragingly as she indicated the chair near

the table which had been placed in readiness for him. "I am all impatience to see the plans."

"Be seated, MacWhinnie," said Mr. Drender brusquely. "Don't mind Margaret; she's one of the partners in the firm—the principal, in fact."

Margaret, standing behind her father's chair, laughed deprecatingly; and there was music in the laugh—for Robert. Shyly he opened the leathern wallet and drew forth the plans. He handed them to his employer, and sat back in his chair. The old iron-master adjusted his glasses and bent over the papers. Once or twice he commented on them, but received no reply. Robert MacWhinnie was watching the face of Margaret. For him Mr. Drender had passed away into the shadows of the study; only the daughter remained in the circle of light thrown by the reading-lamp. He saw a woman of his own age, whose deep black hair glistened in the light, whose eyes were full of a tender sympathy that awakened new emotions in him. An hour before Jean had filled his world—Jean and his ambitions; but now the world had moved, had shifted, and revealed another vision. Jean was a sister, to be loved and teased and coaxed—a woman privy to every thought he conceived, a woman from whom he would not dream of keeping any hope that rose within him. Margaret Drender—she was a woman from whom he would hide the meanest and the greatest of his projects, lest they should never be achieved. That evening Margaret was wearing a dress of bronze satin that rustled musically when she stirred. It was trimmed with intricate weavings of Indian beads, but, when he returned home, Robert

MacWhinnie was able to describe to Jean every fold and twist and loop.

The plans were studied and put away; and then John Drender, with the curtness of the man who lives for iron and absorbs some of its hardness, pushed back his chair and said:

"That'll do, MacWhinnie. I'll see my partner about the matter to-morrow, and you'll be communicated with in the ordinary way. I thank you for coming to see me. This idea of yours may be worth something or nothing; it's the trying that appeals to me. Go on trying."

It was Margaret who accompanied him to the hall, and the echo of her "Good-night" sang in his ears until he reached home.

Mrs. MacWhinnie, who seemed always to have just taken her arms from a baking-bowl, gave him a searching glance as he entered the house. He tried to avert his face, although he would have been ashamed to give a reason.

"Oot wi' it, Rob!" For the first time the accent grated on his nerves. "Is he gaein' to buy it frae ye, or filch it?"

The father broke in with a quiet: "Martha, woman, ye're a' on th' mak'."

"I marrit a MacWhinnie," she gave him, with a shake of the head, and he subsided immediately. "Brains is brains, Donald," she added, "and it's for some o' us to remind Rob that his are no his ain."

Robert kissed her affectionately on the cheek.

"It's all right, mother," he assured her. "Mr.

Drender will give the matter his consideration, and some day——”

“Did ye bring the papers back wi’ ye?” she queried, impatiently thrusting a rebellious end of hair back to its place in the chenille net.

He tried to evade the piercing scrutiny, although he was conscious that all eyes in the little red-papered sitting-room were turned on him. His father was sitting in the rocking-chair that had been the groundwork of a score of “inventions,” and his fingers were feeling “prongs” of the short, stubbly beard; his ears were wide open. Thomas, the eldest son, had not as yet raised his eyes from his book, but his whole body was *watching*. Even the texts on the wall—and there were many—seemed to curl their wool-worked scrolls into eyes.

“And some day, mother,” he said dully, “you shall be repaid for all you’ve done for me.”

“Hear him hawering!” And two arms, bared to the elbow, were raised in an attitude of supplication. “As if onythin’ had been done for him that he didna deserve. Ye gran’ lad, but how cam’ ye to leave your bit papers? Like as no, he’ll copy them—then whaur wull ye be? . . . Donald MacWhinnie, dinna shake y’r head at me. If y’r grandfather had been blessed wi’ a body who could hae looked after his interests ye wad no be settin’ there awonderin’ who’s to bury ye decently when ye gae.”

Jean came into the room, and instantly she divined that something had happened at Mr. Drender’s house.

“The casting of that model has come from the foundry, Rob,” she said. “It’s on your desk.”

"I'll come upstairs immediately, Jean," he replied, and a minute later he had reached the sanctuary of "Charity Corner." Jean, who had led the way, closed and locked the door. She watched him fling himself down on the ottoman and turn his flushed face to the window, through which the twinkling lights of the river craft were peering inquisitively.

"What ails you, Robert?" she asked. "You're all of a tremble."

And into her ears he poured his panegyrics. She listened, first with the tender sympathy of the sister, then with the doubting heart of the woman slightly aroused by jealousy. Not until he held her cheeks between his palms and kissed her brown hair again and again, saying, "Of course, she's no like you, Jean," was she content to be seated at the table and to listen quietly to his further lavish praise.

CHAPTER IV

"Æ FOND KISS"

THE acquaintance developed, as it was bound to do, for, once awakened, real love never sleeps again. And Margaret Drender, too, was haunted by a vision after that first meeting in her father's study. Matters relating to the invention—purely a minor one, by the way—demanded the presence of Robert MacWhinnie at "Jarrowside" on innumerable occasions, and the moments in the hall, after he had taken leave of the ironmaster, lengthened on each successive visit.

And John Drender, his child's happiness at heart, watched the bursting of the bud—watched, not fearfully, but with the solicitude of the gardener whose mind's eye is filled with the glory of the promise.

Robert MacWhinnie was twenty-four years of age when the great chance came to put to the test the genius which those who had sponsored him believed he possessed. Through the influence of Mr. Drender he secured a position under the Japanese Government, and was urged to make hasty preparations for crossing the world. The conditions of the contract into which he entered were that he should remain in Japan for three years, with the option of continuing for another

two years, if he found the climate and work to his liking.

"They're making a new nation out there," Mr. Drender said, "and the foundations that you are to lay will be built on, maybe, for centuries. That's how you must look at it. You're a young man to take over a responsible position of this sort, but I've seldom made a mistake in my judgment. Remember that the reputation of Drender, Masters and Co. is at stake. We shall always be pleased to give advice when approached in the right manner."

And half an hour after leaving his presence Robert MacWhinnie had taken the heart of John Drender's daughter into his keeping. She had hurried from her room when she heard him bidding her father good-night, and as the hall door closed behind him she came from out of the shadows of the rhododendrons and held out her hand. He wasn't surprised to see her there. All the while he was with the parent his heart had been calling to the daughter. She accompanied him through the grounds, and for some time no word was spoken. The year was beginning to die; a cold wind came from the river and snatched greedily at her hair. With a simple movement he raised the lace shawl about her shoulders, and, placing it over her head, tied the corners beneath her chin. Her eyes were riveted on his the while he performed the task, and once, for an instant, as his hand touched her face, she seemed to press forward as though afraid that he would take it away.

"I'm going abroad," he said at last, and waited, almost coward-like, for her to voice that which was

in both hearts. "I was full of it—of enthusiasm—a while back," he stumbled on, "but it's different—now."

And still she remained quiet, although her eyes were eloquent enough.

"Going away for three years. . . . Has Mr. Drender told you?"

She nodded very slowly; then looked away from him.

"It's the chance that we've been praying for—Jean and I."

At last she opened her lips:

"Jean is a splendid sister. . . . There are great possibilities in the country to which you are going. You will not let them slip."

He trembled a little with pride.

"You know Jean only through what I have told you about her. I wish you were better acquainted. She is splendid. I would do anything for her."

"I'm certain of that."

"Three years! It'll be a lonely time for her, because—because Jean needs to be understood; she wants sympathy; she's like me in that way. Jean and I have been friends ever since we were bairns."

Margaret's voice was very low-pitched as she said:

"If only for her sake—because of the hopes she reposes in you—you must win abroad."

"Yes," he said, without enthusiasm. Then: "When we were mere babes we used to dream of—of something like this happening; she was always afraid that some day I should go away and leave her." He tried

to laugh at a thought that came into his head. "She would always have it that, just when she needed me most, some—some woman would creep into my life. . . ."

Margaret had moved nearer to him; unconsciously he had grasped her two hands. Of a sudden there came a rush of courage, and nervousness, faltering, doubt, embarrassment, fled precipitately before that rush; his eyes glowed with the spark of love; the warmth of her presence enveloped him.

"Margaret! It's you—you who have crept into my life," he said, his lips hardly moving to the words. He raised her hands to his lips and kissed them with passion, and—when he lowered them he seemed to be ashamed of what he had said and done. A great fear took hold of him, for she was standing like one transfixed, and her face was so white that the heart might have called back the flow from the body. . . .

"I have offended you?" It was no more than a whisper. He released her hands. "But I had to say it, Margaret. I could not go away without saying it. And if—if I could have gone with the knowledge that you cared, even a little, I should have been strengthened a hundredfold. It means so much to a man, Margaret—to a young man—this love, and the strength of it. Ambition without love—what is it? Effort for effort's sake alone. An empty thing—a selfish thing. Oh! I could have done so much out yonder. . . ."

She stayed him with a sigh. The freed hands crept again into captivity, this time around his neck.

"I do love you, Robert," she whispered, and, whispering, hid her face against his breast.

He folded her tightly to him. He could not speak for a while—he dared not open his lips, for that were near to sacrilege. He pressed his lips to her forehead; the wild beating of his heart found a response in hers.

And so they lingered in the shadows, and when at last she spoke again it was like one who now belonged to another.

"You *will* succeed, Robert," she said; "and I shall wait here, hoping and praying for your return. Three years! Yes, it is a long while, but your love will soften the pain of waiting."

"My Margaret!"

"But there is one promise I wish you to make me."

"It is made already."

"Love—our love—must be only the incentive. All your energies, your thoughts, must be given first to your work. And when you have won success I shall be able to feel that in some measure I contributed to it."

"With your love to fortify me how can I fail?"

"You have not promised."

"I promise."

"Work must come first. There is so much in the world for you to attempt—to achieve."

"It shall be achieved."

With a quick movement she pulled his face down to hers and kissed him twice. Then, before he could reach out to prevent her, she had turned and fled back to the house.

CHAPTER V

MRS. MACWHINNIE WRITES A LETTER

WHEN all the circumstances are weighed, it must be acknowledged that Robert MacWhinnie sailed for the Far East a favored man. He had youth, strength, ambition, and unquestionable ability; he had the stimulus of a sister's devotedness, and the confidence of parents who were satisfied that they had given to the world a genius, even if they did not seek to take to themselves more of the credit than was really due. Behind him he had the influence of Mr. John Drender, head of one of the most reputable ironworks on the Thames; and, above all, he had the love of John Drender's daughter.

It is hardly essential thus early in the romance of Robert MacWhinnie to describe the work which he actually achieved in Japan during those three years that he served under a Government whose spirit was as progressive as his own. Enough that he fulfilled all the prophecies of Mr. John Drender, and laid foundations on which many of the marvels of engineering of to-day were built. The railways, then in their infancy, bridge-building, and the development of national ability—all these were part of his labors. From Tokio to Kobe, from Nagasaki to Hakodate his

operations were spread ; there was no cramping of his efforts, and ideas were seized upon and developed without regard for the cost. It was just the encouragement most calculated to bring out the genius he possessed, and long before his term of three years was run he had reached a height that would have turned the head of one less absorbed in the work itself.

The love of a good woman never retards the labors of a good workman. During those years Robert's love for Margaret Drender deepened ; in the letters which passed between them there was a beauty and breadth that ennobled both writers. Frequently Mr. John Drender himself volunteered advice which he hoped would be of immense value to a young man in a foreign country, and that advice was always accepted in the spirit of one who believed in himself but was ever ready to sit at the feet of wisdom and experience.

It will be gathered from this that the romance which had commenced in the study was not unknown to the old ironmaster. It is not to anticipate the development of that romance to say that while Mr. John Drender made no verbal reference to it, he was content to abide by the choice of Margaret. In his heart he was deeply attached to the man whom he had watched from boyhood. He believed that the name of Robert MacWhinnie would one day be a force of which the engineering world might speak with something akin to reverence.

In one of his letters to Robert he made pointed inquiry of his intentions when the three years' contract should have expired, and in phrases which could

not be misunderstood, and which could not be said in any way to detract from his sense of dignity, he hinted at the time when increasing years should prevent his giving so much time to the ironworks, and when the infusion of new blood in the form of a junior partner might mean the granting of a new lease of life to the firm. Bearing upon this, the letter which Robert MacWhinnie wrote to Margaret was some index to those intentions of his:

“YOKOHAMA.

“SWEETHEART.—The mail arrived this morning. From my bungalow on the top of the Bluff I watched the boat come out of the morning haze into the harbor; for mail days mean so much to us—we who are separated from those we love by nearly twelve thousand miles of land and water.

“Your father has written me a charming letter. It is as though he had read and understood all that has been in my heart since I left home. A junior partnership in the firm of Drender and Masters seems like a crown of triumph to all the work I have endeavored to do while out here. Think what it would mean to you and me! Truly, I am favored. Sometimes, when I reflect on all the happiness that is mine, on all the silver with which my path has been strewn, I feel that the gods, in shaping my destiny, had some great and special mission for me.” (Truly prophetic words, in the light of what was to come!)

“At present we are bridge-building in the north of the island, but with a continuance of the native energy that has been manifested since my arrival, the work will be completed some weeks before my contract with the Government is due to expire. I shall come home, Margaret. Success in itself has its grandeur, but no amount of success can compensate for the pain of the solitude—without you.

“Jean writes regularly, but of late there has been a brevity about her letters that puzzles me. Usually, she is so communicative, so ‘newsy,’ that the falling off is all the more emphasized. If I didn’t know Jean so intimately, and wasn’t so closely acquainted with all her views on life, I should say that my little brown-haired mentor had fallen in love.

I shall send her a letter by this mail to inquire his name, and when you see her again, you may pinch her cheeks for me."

And the reply which Margaret Drender sent to that letter affords some indication of the workings of *her* mind:

"JARROWSIDE.

"MY ROBERT.—Before he wrote to you, father spoke to me about the prospects of your becoming a junior partner in the firm; and so great was my excitement, that I hastened to your mother's house to convey to her the news. She was delighted, so much so that she had a little weep all to herself.

"You are doing splendidly out there; but, then, I always knew that no goal would be too distant for you, no height too difficult to climb. We follow the record of your achievements through the trade journals, and we don't hesitate to criticize any of your projects which do not fit in with our old-fashioned ideas. Only three years! Father says it's little short of miraculous. And I—what would you have me say? Your dear reminder that in a short while the contract will expire filled me with joy which my poor pen refuses to describe. Not that I needed a reminder, for every day has been ticked off, and every to-morrow has come with a swifter rush than the last. How like children we become when love enters in! I have made of the calendar of days to come a kind of long white road, with the figure of you at the end. In my own little study there is a great map of the world, disfigured by an impetuous pen—a pen that has written down the distance between each port of call.

"Robert, I never dreamed that love was half so great a thing as this. It has taken possession of me. It has filled my whole life. You are never absent from my thoughts. But, Robert, I have not surrendered the promise you made me on the night our hearts were opened. Let it be work first. Let it never be said that because of the selfishness of my love your greatness was retarded or limited. (I wonder if in your mind's eye you can see my poor fingers

trembling as I write that? They are feverish to write that which the heart dictates.)

"I'm afraid that you'll say that my letters are never 'newsy,' like Jean's; but then, there is only one absorbing subject.

"Your references to dear Jean's letters amused me. Indeed, you are a prophet, for when I last met her she made me her confidante. No, I must let Jean herself break the news. She is very happy—almost as happy as I am."

By the same mail Robert received a letter from his mother. It was written on a page taken from a school copy-book, and it was singularly expressive, if lacking eloquence:

"MY BOY.—We've done with the flitting, and the new house is 'Fern Brae,' River Bank, Greenwich. The flitting cost an awful sight, but I managed to put past nearly half of what you sent, aye, and without letting your father know a word about it. He was all for stopping in the old house and spending the money on another idea of his—making the harmonyam play by clockwork, as if my poor head didn't get enough of it without. I told him: 'Donald, if you think you can make the thing a pair of real legs, so's it can walk out of the house and drown itself, I'll sell my best bonnet to help you with the models.' And up he jumps, saying that if it hadn't been for him, where would Robert have got his brains?

"Now, my boy, blood's thicker than water, and charity begins at home. John Drender knows your worth. So do I. Don't give any more of your brains away for nothing, and don't let him flatter you into softness. Margaret Drender is a nice bit woman, but if you hadn't any brains, do you think her father would let her look at you? When they come talking to me about what you're doing, and what you're going to do, I say to them, 'Would one of you have knitted him a pair of socks if he'd growed up without brains?' Your father says I'm teaching you to be selfish. Rubbish, I say. You'll find as you grow older that the more you study yourself and your own, the more the world studies

you. They used to call my grandfather a hard old devil in Ballyhoustie, but they were always taking off their hats to him in the hope of finding a soft spot.

"You will be pleased to hear Thomas is doing awful well outside his work. He spoke a speech at the Socialists' last week, and he fair made me cry with the way he downed them as always wanted to be on top. Jamie's a grand lad, and is likely to be a rare comic. When you come home, he'll sing to you. David's still his mother's boy, and as for your father, he's still borrowing money from us to make inventions that somebody made years before. His latest is a rubber ball let into the legs of chairs, because he can't stand the scraping on the floor. Your father might have been a rich man to-day, if he hadn't invented so much.

"I'm trying hard to get used to this new house, but I weary for the old one. There's always something about a new house that reminds you of how much you've left behind in the old one. A body grows into a house, but she can't grow out of it. Do you know the feeling, Rob? I think I do, because Jean was awful keen on having your study in the new house just as it was in the old one. And it's in the same place—right on the top—and all the old furniture is like as you left it. Jean keeps the key."

Two months before he left Yokohama for home Robert wrote a letter to Margaret, in which he carefully balanced all the prospects, arriving at the conclusion that, without the joy of her presence near him, further success would be hollow. He was coming home, he said, and he would lose no time in visiting "Jarrowside." He added:

"My bonnie Jean has told me everything, and although at first I was as jealous as a lover in disfavor, I'm just dying to pick her up and kiss her for very joy. She tells me that the lucky man is 'Wullie' Henderson, who attended the classes with me when I was serving my apprenticeship. He was only a youngster then, but I dare say that he's grown into a fine young man. You can't imagine how I felt when

I learned that Jean had given her heart to someone, for always I have been inclined to regard her as belonging peculiarly to me. Always, she has been a little girl with long brown hair. Isn't it strange that during this absence from home I have never been able to think of Jean as a woman? I remember how she used to mother me, when she couldn't have been more than thirteen—how she chased the MacKendricks down the street with a broom-handle for interfering with 'her bairn.' It was Jean who cut down Thomas's clothes for me, and made them less unseemly than when my mother had finished with them—Jean who helped to make my kites, and who would run a mile over ditches and fences to recover the kite when the string broke—Jean who pleaded for me when father took the 'tawse' down from the nail on the wall—Jean who smuggled my dinner into the garret where I was kept a prisoner for three days for stealing the eggs of a setting hen. And now Jean has fallen in love with another man! Bless me, I must be selfish, but I wanted Jean to go on living for me! Willie Henderson's a lucky man."

And about the time that Robert MacWhinnie was writing that letter, the heart of his sister Jean was being torn asunder.

CHAPTER VI

MILLSTONES

THE ship entered the river an hour after sunset, and by the time she was berthed and the passengers disembarked it was nearly ten o'clock. Since daybreak Robert MacWhinnie had been on deck, afraid to miss a single point in the coast-line, for a sight of which he had been hungering for three years. Although he had expressed a wish that they should not make the journey from Greenwich to the docks if the boat should arrive late, he was a little hurt to find no one there to give him a welcome. He engaged a cab, and when at last it stopped at the door of his father's house the feeling of disappointment gave way to one of pleasurable excitement. In a few seconds he became a boy again, and with all the boisterousness of youth he leaped up the steps and gave the door a vigorous knock. The next minute his arms were tightly wrapped around his mother, and she was laughing and sobbing in turns.

"Rob, man! Is it really ye? I want tae greet an' greet. . . . Man, ye're the color of a Pathan, an' as big as big! . . . An' is a' that luggage yours? . . . An' a cab, Rob? Eh! the extravagance of the man! . . . Ye'll be awf'y rich? . . . Whaur's y'r faither? He never was just there when I wanted him."

"When ye've finished wi' the laddie," came from the diminutive Donald behind her, "I'll hae a word to say to him. . . . Hie, Jamie! and ye, David! shoulder this luggage. Rob, man, it's pleased I am to see ye back! . . . Eh, Rob, but it's a long time sin' ye did that." For Robert had kissed him as heartily as he had kissed his mother. And Jamie and David were kissed in turn, although they frowned as in shame.

Robert was hurried—almost carried—into the dining-room, where everything had been arranged in readiness for his return. The table was spread, his old chair was in its customary place, his old slippers were on the hearthrug. Mrs. MacWhinnie forced him into a chair and insisted on taking off his boots, defying any of the others to interfere. He allowed her to perform the task, understanding the joy she derived from it. And all the while she knelt at his feet she poured out a torrent of criticism. They were grand boots, and they must have cost a sight of money, but did he think the welts would be strong enough when the winter came? And who had knitted his stockings? No one who had any idea of how stockings ought to be knitted. And how were his flannels? And wasn't he thankful that he'd reached home in safety? And had he never thought of her, sitting there night after night while he was on the water, and tormenting herself into a fever lest the engines in the ship should stop, or the ship itself be piled up on the rocks?

And Donald, his father, was plying him with questions about all that had happened in Japan. Were the Japanese really as small as they were said to be?

Were they getting over cannibalism? How had he understood their language? How had they paid him, and was he satisfied that their money was good?

The two voices blended disturbingly, Donald's rising shrilly when he feared that his wife's was getting an audience to the prejudice of his own; and frequently she shouted an injunction to him to "bide his while" and to remember that Robert was her son.

Thomas, thin, almost gaunt, and sour of temper, had been reading near the window. He had shown no particular concern in his brother's return, but as the babel rose he flung down his books and asked how any man could be expected to understand his subject while so much noise was going on.

"Thomas," cried Robert, flinging out a hand toward his brother, "you haven't given me a grip! How are you, old fellow, and how's the world wagging with you?"

"Same as it always did," came sullenly from Thomas.

"Pay no heed, Robert," the father interrupted. "Tammis is no hissel' these days. It's liver—or literature—wi' him, an' the ane is as bad as th' ither."

And the slippers were on, and he had risen to his feet to stamp the hearthrug with that last mark of gratification, when, in a voice that was lowered in self-reproach, Robert exclaimed:

"Jean! Where's my bonnie Jean? I almost expected her to be at the docks awaiting me, but I suppose——" He was going to smile, but of a sudden he *felt* that something was wrong. His brothers glanced at each other, and then at their parents, as though

urging them to take the lead, and Donald looked at his wife and frowned.

"Jean's in her ain room," he said to Robert, with a sigh. "She's never out o' it these days."

"Draw up to the table, Robert," Mrs. MacWhinnie urged. "Dinna let the greetin' of a lassie rob ye of an appetite."

But Robert's face was all wrinkles, and he looked first at one, then at the other, as if he doubted that they were not playing some practical joke upon him.

"But, mother, I must see Jean!" he protested. "Where is she?"

"In her room, didna y'r faither tell ye? . . . Do sit down, man, and hae some food."

"Is she ill?"

"She's no ill bodily, and if she had the strength o' mind that God was good enough tae gi'e her mither, she'd no be ill i' ither respects. Rob, I hae no patience wi' grief when it lasts that long ye're not certain it isna a selfish grief."

"Grief? What grief has Jean suffered?"

Mrs. MacWhinnie turned to her husband.

"Ye'd better tell him, Donald. He'll no eat a bite till he kens it a'."

Donald MacWhinnie nodded his acceptance of the duty.

"It happened two months ago, Rob. We would hae sent ye word, if we hadna thought it might interfere wi' y'r work."

"What could work mean if anything were wrong with Jean?" Robert asked, a suspicion of anger in his voice.

Mr. MacWhinnie gave his little beard an upward flick with the side of his forefinger.

"Well, we didna send word, that's a'," he said; "an' I may tell ye it was the lassie's wish ye shouldna ken onything about it till ye reached hame. We wrote ye about Wullie Henderson?"

Robert was blinking helplessly.

"Jean told me all about it," he managed to say.

"Ay. A gran' lad, Wullie."

"I remember him well. He and I studied together."

"Of course ye did. He was a gran' lad, and we thought a great deal about him."

"*Was* a grand lad? What mean you, father?"

"He's dead," said Donald laconically.

Robert leaned heavily against the table.

"Dead!" he repeated. "My poor Jean!"

"He had the makin's of a fine engineer, Robert. Through my word and influence Mr. Drender would hae gi'en him the chance he needed. But God's ways are mysterious, an' it's no for us to complain. Wullie was killed i' the works. God was merciful. It was soon over. A cracked pulley flew to bits, and Wullie was hit. Your brither Tammias picked him up, but the laddie said nae mair than: 'God be good to Jean!'"

Robert had covered his eyes with his hand while his father was speaking, and his bronzed cheeks were wet with tears.

"You should have written and told me," he said, in a broken voice. "Why, I must have sent two or three letters to Jean since her bereavement, and they were letters full of my foolish teasing. In my trunk there's

yards and yards of silk that I've brought home for her wedding. What can I say to her?"

As he spoke, Mrs. MacWhinnie, who had left the room, was heard calling up the stairs:

"Jean! Do ye no ken that y'r brither's hame? Come down immediate. There's a time to greet an' a time no to greet."

"Mother!" Robert cried out sharply, "let me go to Jean."

He left his father standing near the fire, and crossed the room in a few strides.

"Jean, my bonnie lass," he called, "I'm coming up to you!"

And the next moment he was in her room. Poor Jean! She had altered so much that he threw up his hands, and uttered a low cry of dismay. There was not a particle of color in her cheeks; the eyes were dark-ringed and weary with weeping.

"Rob!" she sobbed, and slowly slipped into the comfort of his arms.

Her dear brown head was pillowed on his breast, her arms tightened around his neck as though she feared he might slip away, and as she continued to sob he kissed her hair again and again.

"Jean," he murmured, "they should have told me—they should have told me. My poor, heartbroken Jean!"

She raised her head, but still held tightly to him.

"It was my wish, Robert," she said. "It was my grief. Why should you be asked to share it?"

"Why?" he echoed. "Because if Jean MacWhinnie shared all the joys of her life with her brother,

should not he expect to share the sorrows? Jean, you can't tell how I've wanted you out yonder. It would have been fine, woman, to have had you looking after my little bungalow. You would have fallen in love with it at first sight, Jean. It was so wee, I couldn't stand upright without pushing my head through the bamboo ceiling! And no beds to make, Jean; just a rice-mat to lie down on. And my fish-pond in the garden—especially in the cherry-blossom season! Ah! if you had been there, Jean. . . .”

“You remember Willie?” Her mind was too grief-laden to be moved by his description of his Japanese home.

“Yes, Jean,” he answered softly; “and if I had been asked to choose a man for you I could not have thought of a better.”

She had lowered her face again, and now her sobbing shook both her and him.

“I understand, Jean,” he whispered, stroking her brown hair. “To-morrow I'm going to see my Margaret. I can imagine her feelings, if anything like this had happened to me.”

“You've written to her, Robert?” Her face was still hidden against his breast.

“Yes. She knows that I'm going to Jarrowside in the morning.”

“You're going to marry her, Robert?”

“God grant it,” he said. “It's because I love her so deeply that I can well understand and sympathize with you in your sorrow.”

“You'll be going back—to Japan?”

“No, Jean. I'm going to stay here with you and

Margaret. I have to write to the Government tomorrow, to say whether or no I shall go back. There's a great deal of work yet to be done, but there's a rare lot of genius among the natives of the country."

"Robert"—she spoke hesitantly, nervously—"I wish you were going back."

Surprised, he held her at arm's length and looked into her eyes.

"What mean you, Jean?" he exclaimed. "Why should you wish that?"

"I wish that you were going to take Margaret with you—and me."

"And you, Jean?"

"Because no one understands me like you. If I'd had your sympathy, lately——"

He kissed her again.

"Jean," he said, "you're going to have my sympathy for the rest of your life. . . . Now I'm going downstairs, but I'm fair drouthy to see the new 'Charity Corner.' I have so much to tell you, so much to show you."

"It's not a new 'Charity Corner,' Rob. God grant"—she lowered her head again—"God grant that ye'll be your ain sweet self in it."

Impulsively she wound her arms around his neck, and pressed her cheek against his.

"Rob," she said, "why did you come back? Oh, why did you come back?"

He knew she had not told him all. He was shaking his head in a bewildered way.

"My own self?" he said; "why, did you expect me

to be different? And why have I come back? Jean, woman, they're strange words from you."

Fears which he could not define came into his mind. They dazed him. Jean had never been hysterical. There was something looming phantom-like out of the shadows of her grief.

"You have something to tell me, Jean; there's something else?"

"There's nothing to tell you, Robert."

"Thank God for that, Jean," he said, without knowing why he said it.

Jamie called to him from the foot of the stairs.

"We'll have a long talk to-morrow, Jean, lass," he whispered tenderly. "I would like you to come down and unpack my boxes. There's a kimono in one of them that will send mother into a sermon on extravagance. You'd think it had been made for a princess."

"I'll not come down, Robert, to-night. I want to sit here and think. I'll listen for you going to bed, and I'll call out good-night to you. . . . Robert"—she kissed him again—"Margaret will not sleep to-night, thinking about you. You're finer than ever. But I wish—I wish you were going back."

"Jean!" he cried. "That's twice you've said that."

She urged him toward the door.

"Go down, Robert," she said. "Jamie's calling. To-morrow we'll talk to each other."

Robert went back to the dining-room, and, believing that he was studying Jean's wishes, he made no reference to the death of Henderson. They all sat down to supper, and during the meal he endeavored to answer all the questions that were put to him. It

was when they sat back in their chairs and began to speak of the future that he felt for the first time the weight of the millstones around his neck.

"Ye'll be awa' i' th' morning to see Margaret Drender?" Mrs. MacWhinnie said.

"Yes, mother," he replied. "I would have gone to-night, if the ship had been berthed earlier. She knows that I shall be there to-morrow."

"Aye, aye," said Mrs. MacWhinnie, and sighed deeply. "'A son's a son till he gets a wife.'"

Thomas laughed harshly.

"You wouldn't keep Robert tied to your apron-strings all his life, mother?" he suggested, and before she could make reply he added: "Robert's only human, and a wife's a wife."

"We're no going to talk about that," Mr. MacWhinnie burst in. "What I want you to tell me, Robert, is this: Do the people in that country appreciate genius? Man, I have an awf'y clever idea for a child's toy, that would bring in thousands if it was properly worked."

Mrs. MacWhinnie looked across at Robert, and there was a note of anxiety in her voice as she said: "It'll be a long time before ye think o' gettin' marrit, Rob?"

"Don't let's talk about it, mother," he answered. "Let's talk about you, yourselves. How have you been getting along without me?"

"I couldna bear the thought of your leaving me just when I'm beginning tae look forward to the fruits o' all I've done for you."

And again Thomas laughed, saying: "'A son's a son till he gets a wife,' mother."

"Ye can't tell how y'r brothers have been looking forward to y'r home-coming. They think the world of you, Rob. They think there's no one like you. Your faither's never been able to gi'e them the chance they deserved, but I've said to them again and again, 'Wait till Rob comes into his ain.'"

"I mind the day when we first cam' to Rotherhithe." Donald MacWhinnie was stroking the points of his beard. "There was twenty pound amang us——"

"If ye want to please Rob," said Thomas, "ye'll no talk so much about what has been. If there's anything a man dislikes more than another, it's to be reminded of his humble start in life. If you talk like that now, faither, how are you going to talk when you have to touch your cap to Mr. Robert MacWhinnie, junior partner in the firm of Drender, Masters and Co.?"

"Tammass," said his father, "I wad thank ye to keep y'r sentiments for the Park o' th' Sunday mornings. It's no respectfu' to y'r faither, and it shows a lack of sympathy with the MacWhinnies that are dead. Man! if you'd talked to them as you're talking to me now, they'd hae taken ye out into the back yard, and put some sense where ye hae nane now."

Jamie said, with some degree of importance: "When Rob has charge of the works there are one or two persons in them that I'd like to square things with."

And so they went on for an hour or so, until at last the father intimated that it was time for the

evening reading, after which they would be glad to get to their beds.

“Robert,” said Mr. MacWhinnie, as he wiped his spectacles with the corner of a red check handkerchief and looked down at the Book, “we’ve thought of ye every night when it cam’ to the readin’.” He opened the Book and commenced:

“My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. . . .”

CHAPTER VII

CHARITY CORNER

THEY had all retired, leaving him to write some letters of importance. He was in the study—in "Charity Corner." Jamie had led the way and left him there. The same old study, the same colored walls, the same sloping ceiling, and the cherished red ottoman near the window; it was as though the old room had been lifted in its entirety and carried across the river. The furniture was arranged as he would have it; he could sit on the ottoman and watch the twinkling mast-lights of the outward-bound steamers until they disappeared around the bend of the river. And she had placed the old bowls of flowers in the old favored positions.

"And, Jean," he whispered, as he drew a chair to the table and reached for a pen, "there's the same old feeling of peace and quiet."

He wrote steadily for half an hour; then the pen dropped from his fingers. Someone was coming slowly up the stairs. He knew that it was she; but not until he heard her pause outside in the corridor did he rise and go to the door, carrying the shaded oil-lamp with him.

She was leaning against the jamb of the door, and the yellow light of the lamp gave her thin, pinched

face an unnatural color. She had taken down her long brown hair; it was flowing over her shoulders. She might have been about to retire for the night, when the breaking heart urged her to creep upstairs in search of further sympathy.

"Jean!" he whispered, holding the lamp above his head.

"I startled you, Rob?"

"I was writing. . . . Everything was so quiet."

He stepped back into the room, and she followed, noiselessly, closing the door behind her, and turning the key in the lock. He replaced the lamp on the table, and held out his hands toward her. She might not have seen the action, for she moved past him, and crept to the ottoman. For a long while he looked at her without speaking; then he seated himself by her side, and placed his right arm around her shoulders. She half-covered her face against his breast. He could feel her trembling.

"Jean! What is it?"

She opened her lips so slightly that the words were hardly distinguishable, running into each other as they did.

"I couldn't sleep, Robert, until I had seen you again."

He gathered up a handful of the brown hair, and dropped it again.

"Your mind is all anyhow," he whispered soothingly. "What can I say or do?"

"Don't say anything yet, Rob. I—I want to tell you why I came up here."

"I'm listening, Jean." And now he was trembling as with apprehension.

"I lied to you, Robert, and I couldn't sleep. I daren't lie to you."

"You lied to me, Jean? What do you mean?"

"You asked me to-night, when first you came in, if there was anything else, and I said there wasn't."

"There was something else?"

She moved her head in affirmation; then her emotions broke in a turbulent stream; she lifted her hands to her face and sobbed: "Oh, Rob, Rob, I wish we were bairns again!"

He tightened his arms about her, and pressed her to him, vainly trying to still her sobs.

"Ma heirt is breakin', Rob"—in grief she rushed back to the accent of their childhood—"just breakin', and it's no because o' masel'. It's because o' what I've brought ye tae."

He allowed her to sob uninterruptedly for a moment. Then:

"Don't you think you had better go to bed, Jean, woman?" he whispered soothingly; "you're all upset. In the morning we'll talk about it."

"No, Rob. It must be talked about now. I lied to you. There was something else."

For a second he dared not ask her what that something was; but when he pressed his lips against her cheek, and reminded her of the confidence they had exchanged as children, she sank slowly to the floor, and hid her face in her hands, resting those hands on his knee.

"There's no one in the world who would under-

stand me, save you, Rob. There's no one but you who would forgive me."

"Jean, my bonnie lass," he whispered, "what are you talking about? What is it that you want to say to me? Why don't you say it?"

"Don't you guess, Robert? Have you no idea?"

"Guess, Jean?"

"This grief of mine—is it *all* because Willie Henderson's dead?"

And still he plunged in doubt and misunderstanding.

"Tell me, Jean!" he said, in desperation. "Tell me everything."

"Willie, he loved me, and, oh! Rob, it meant so much to me after you'd gone, because no one in this house tried to understand me. It was sympathy I wanted, and you'd gone! Why did you go? Why didn't you take me with you? Robert, don't *you* understand?"

He passed his hand over his forehead, and looked at her through half-closed eyes.

"For the love of God, Jean," he said, "tell me the truth."

She raised her head so that he might look into her eyes, eyes through which the heart was laid bare. With a peculiar cry he pushed her from him and leaped to his feet.

"Jean!"—there was horror in his eyes—"you don't mean that? You can't mean that! It isn't true! You're fooling me?"

Her lips twitched pitiably.

"I'm no fooling you, Robert."

"Damn him——!"

She threw out her hands imploringly.

"Hush, Robert! For the love of God, have a little pity! He loved me. He was kind to me. I wanted his sympathy. He gave it to me. We were to be married soon. Nobody understood me, only him and you. Nobody in this house; they were all so different. You understood."

"The damned villain——"

"Robert! Try to believe that he loved me. No one knows what I've passed through. No one knows what *he* suffered, in that last minute when he was dying. He loved me truly. Don't raise your voice, Robert. They'll hear, and they won't understand. They'll never understand. They're all so narrow. They'd despise me, Robert; they'd send me out. I nearly went out, after he died, but I thought of you, Robert, and I knew that out of the past you would drag some memory of when we were boy and girl together, and you'd find in your heart just a grain of pity. That's why I waited for your return; I didna dare go without seein' you, although I was sairly tempted."

He had crossed over to the table; he was staring at the blank notepaper before him. The word "Dis-honor" seemed to emerge from the whiteness and laugh mockingly in his face. He looked up at the farther wall; the scriptural texts, worked in wool by her hand, had taken to themselves the same hideous word. He thought—he thought of Margaret Drender and of her father, and he saw the horror on their faces. . . .

"Rob. . . ."

He didn't hear her; he didn't look round. His ears were full of a rushing noise, his eyes were watching the tumbling and crumbling of dream-castles—castles which he and she had built together.

"Rob, will ye no forgive me?"

"Hush, Jean!" And his voice was strained and hoarse.

"Ye canna find it in your heirt to forgive me. . . . Rob! Look! It's in 'Charity Corner' that I'm kneeling. Can ye no think of the hours. . . . Oh, Rob! Rob!"

He had come again to her side. He had crushed her to him, the while the tears flowed from his eyes, dripping on her dear brown hair. He saw not the woman who had sinned; he held not the woman who had yielded in a weak moment; he kissed not the woman who had sinned for the sake of sinning, or because of the passion of the moment; he kissed, and forgave, and asked God to help him to protect the little sister of thirteen who had mothered him when the MacKendricks fought him on the banks of the Clyde, and she chased them down the street with a broomstick in her hand. He thought not of the dishonor that had come upon the MacWhinnies. He thought only of the sanctuary to which he must carry the poor, tortured soul of his little sister. He thought not of his own ambitions—not even of the woman who had lifted him toward the heavens; he thought only of brown-haired Jean, and how he might help her.

And in the end he lifted her from her knees, whence she had sunk again, and placed her on the old red

ottoman. Then he went back to the table, saying: "Wait a minute, Jean; wait till my head clears. Don't speak. Just look out of the window and watch the lights go by."

He picked up the pen and commenced to write. He spoke to her over his shoulder:

"I do understand, Jean. Better than you imagine. . . . Thank God I came back in time."

Then he changed his tone of voice. There was no inflection that would lead her to suppose he regarded what he contemplated doing as a sacrifice.

"Jean, I'm going back to Japan. There's work to be done out there—good work, and big. And I want a housekeeper—a housekeeper just like you; and you're going with me. We're sailing by the next boat. Keep quiet. Tell no one of what you've told me. Don't speak. I know you're thinking of her. But you mustn't. I'm writing to the Government to say that I'm coming back by the next boat. They had a shrewd idea that I would return. They said to me: 'You'll not be able to stay away; you'll feel the call in your blood, just as they all do.' And—and I'm writing to her, Jean."

She was huddled up on the ottoman, and her eyes were fixed on him as though all her hopes of eternal peace rested on his decision.

He wrote to Margaret Drender:

"MARGARET.—I arrived home to-night. Something has happened to prevent my seeing you to-morrow. You were right. Love should be only an incentive to work, and there is work for me to do on the other side of the world. I am going away almost at once, without even seeing you, lest the seeing should mean the staying.

ROBERT."

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAY BACK

IMPULSIVENESS is not heroism, although it is very closely related. The coldly analytical mind may suggest many reasons for the sudden resolve of Robert MacWhinnie to defend his sister Jean, whatever might be the consequences. That he acted quickly—on the spur, as it were—is not to be argued in his favor nor to his prejudice. The moment was one in which the brain was bound to be speeded—one of those moments when the intricate machinery of the mind seems to concentrate its energy to one end. The way out of the difficulty that he conceived in that moment was possibly the most natural in the circumstances. Perhaps it is somewhat easy to attribute to him the virtues of a hero, but it is not to lessen his worth to suggest that he was not without the weaknesses of the race. It would be unjust to deprive him of a shred of credit for what he proposed to do and sacrifice in behalf of his sister; but, in trying to be just, one is tempted to believe that his own pride had been wounded by Jean's disclosure, and that, great as was his love for Margaret Drender, he was ready to set it on one side rather than that she should know of the disgrace.

“Disgrace” is a hard word to use, but this is a con-

ventional world, and Jean's predicament was one that will never be known as anything else but disgrace until the world widens its point of view and considers circumstances before condemning. In Jean's case, her own confession to Robert must be recalled—whether it be to her advantage or otherwise. It was sympathy for which she hungered, the sympathy that was denied her at home. Long afterward Robert came to understand the difference, in her case, between love and sympathy.

To revert to Robert. It may be put forward that, in acting as he did, he paid no tribute to his parents. If they could not find it in their hearts to pity their daughter, whence was she to seek pity at all? The only reply to that thought is that no one in the house of MacWhinnie understood better the mind of the MacWhinnies than did Robert. The experience which he had gained of men and matters during his sojourn abroad had widened the mind that would otherwise have remained cramped. The narrow points of view which had been inculcated during youth were changed; he had a wider conception of human nature; so broadened had his mind become that he was able to appreciate the smallness of the MacWhinnie mind at home, and make allowance for, or tolerate it. Therein lay one of Robert MacWhinnie's greatest qualities. He could come back to that narrow circle, yet retain the broadened view without comment or protest.

One is tempted to ask, "Could his love for Margaret Drender have been very sincere, if he was so ready to cast it on one side for the sake of pride, for the sake of his sister?" When this story of the

MacWhinnies shall have neared its end, none will deny that few women were loved so deeply as was Margaret. Those three years in the Far East could never have been lived by him if it had not been for the stimulating memories of Margaret Drender. His ambition, always swift and strong, was given greater impetus by her letters of devotedness and encouragement. He worked for her, making her the starting-point and the goal.

And so it is difficult rightly to describe all that Robert MacWhinnie felt that night in the little study, when the broken-hearted sister knelt at his feet and poured out her grief incoherently, yet with terrible significance. There is another line of thought to be pursued. What of Jean? What nobleness could there have been in her heart? Had she deliberately allowed herself to accept his sacrifice at the expense of the other woman? Was the great love which he manifested being requited by her willingness to say "yes" to the proposals he made? Is it inconceivable, or unkind to suggest, that Jean herself felt that she was paying some penalty for her lapse by going out of the country, so that none save he might know of her shame? Wasn't it to save the honor of the family, and of Robert MacWhinnie?

But maybe this is not the time to be didactic, or to argue the many phases of the situation. Enough that he saw his path lying white and shining before him, that he believed it was his duty. Has it not been said already that Robert MacWhinnie, with his broad, open face and prematurely silvered temples, was just the man to be born to trouble, just the kind of man

one would expect to meet at that stile of the proverb where lame dogs foregather and whine for help?

On the day following the confession, Jean kept to her room. Robert's instructions had been very explicit. Their first anxiety must be to keep suspicion from the minds of their parents. He knew, and Jean knew, that there is nothing so terrible to overcome as the prejudice of the religionist who sets his religion, or his conception of religion, before pity, blinding himself the while to the fundamental truth that pity is the greater part of religion.

"Jean," he told her, "you and I will go out there, and you shall help me to make the name of MacWhinnie honored by that nation which is just emerging from feudalism. We shall go almost immediately, for I promised the Government out there that they should have an answer to their proposals before I had been in the Old Country a week."

She spoke of Margaret, fearfully, falteringly, but with adroitness he led her to believe that he could satisfactorily explain everything to the woman whose heart was in his keeping. Long after Jean went to her room that night his mind grappled with the new task that had arisen. He anticipated all the questioning that was likely to be aroused by his sudden decision, and psychologically he studied aright.

At midday he was still in the house, and had given no sign of any intention to visit the Drenders. Mrs. MacWhinnie, with the observancy of her sex, remarked the fact to her husband; then very tactfully urged the rest of the family out of earshot while she questioned her son.

He was writing at a table near the window; she was standing a few paces behind him. She studied him intently for a moment; the rough, red fingers plucked the hem of her apron.

"Robert, man, ye'll be going over to 'Jarrowside' to-day?"

"No, mother." He went on writing.

"Margaret will be coming here?"

"I don't think so, mother. I wrote to her last night."

"Ye've no quarreled?"

"No, mother! Nobody could quarrel with Margaret. I thought you would have known her by this time."

"I know her fine. But a's no weel wi' ye?"

He leaned back in his chair, and, looking out of the window, replied: "Mother, do you remember what you once said to me—about what I owed to the family? I have been thinking about that a great deal lately. I'm still a young man."

"An' a grand man!" Her voice trembled with pride.

"And there's so much to be done before I should think of considering myself——"

"Before ye marry, Robert?"

He nodded, and kept his lips tightly closed, so that she should be deceived by his apparent calmness.

"I've written to Margaret."

"Ye said that before, Robert." Now she was screwing up a corner of her lace apron between finger and thumb.

"Margaret will be the last person in the world to

allow our engagement to hinder me in my ambitions."

"The very last, Robert. She told me that hersel'."

He was still gazing out at the river.

"Out yonder, in the Far East, a man who has his wits about him, and who is unfettered by sentiment of any kind, may rise to any height. He may achieve anything. It is a country full of promise, and, what is more, there are other lands within a week's sail where brains are at a premium." He closed his eyes, as though he were recalling reminiscences for her benefit. In truth, he was afraid that his eyes would betray him. "I met many influential men out there, mother."

"None better than ye, Robert."

"And they tried to persuade me not to return so early."

"We were just dyin' to see ye."

"Three years is a very little time, and I had achieved so much. Those men whom I met—men of capital and position—told me that in Korea, or Siberia, or even in the island of Formosa, a man who knew his profession might perform miracles in the space of ten years. But I wanted to come home——" (It came out suddenly, and with the suggestion of a sob.) "I'm not a man entirely without sentiment! I never knew a Scot who was."

"Robert, man!" Her hand was on his shoulder. "Pit marriage oot o' y'r heid for a bit. Wait till y'r brithers have had the chance that y'r faither was able to gi'e you."

He smiled a little sadly. He could feel the weight of the millstones.

"They were awfu' guid lads when we set about making a man of ye."

"I don't forget that, mother."

"They worked hard, and for very little, but they never complained."

"I shall try to do what is right by them, mother."

"I know ye will, my bonnie lad." Then, with a sigh, half relief, half regret: "Margaret's an awfy fine woman, but I think she'll say all that I've said, if ye put it to her in the right way."

"I've already done that, mother," he said quietly; "and that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

"I knew there was something on your mind, Robert. I was watching ye all the breakfast hour."

"I have decided to go back," he said, without appearing to have heard her remark. "There's a mail boat sailing at the end of the week."

As though she had been anticipating this—hoping for it—and had rehearsed the reply, she said:

"But, Robert, man, ye'll have been hame on'y a few days!"

There was no outburst of disappointment at the thought of parting again so soon.

The holder of the pen snapped under the pressure of his fingers.

"It's the fear, mother, that if I stay longer, the longer I shall want to stay. The East is calling to me, just as it calls to everybody. I feel that if I go out now, at once, everything will be just as I left it. I'm hungering to see it again, to take up the work where I left it. Who but a MacWhinnie can finish it? Moreover, the Government out there has been

exceedingly kind and considerate. I don't want to play the part of pioneer only. I want to go on with the work and see it to its finish. There's a delicate piece of work to be done in Tokio Harbor, and I have a great scheme in my mind for circumventing the usual results of a seismic disturbance—an earthquake, mother. . . . I've decided to go back by the ship that sails at the end of the week. And I've been thinking, mother, that, if anything will help to soften the grief of Jean, it will be a trip to the Far East."

He kept his eyes on the writing-table as he said this, expecting a torrent of surprised questioning. But, instead of that, Mrs. MacWhinnie said very calmly:

"That's fine, Robert—that's fine."

He glanced up at her, suspicion in his mind; but her next words quieted it:

"I shall be easier in my mind if Jean is wi' ye to manage y'r bit hoose. And, after a', a man wi' ambition needs on'y a housekeeper."

At the moment he was grateful for this attitude of hers, but there came a day when he realized the selfishness of it. That was long afterward, when the burden of the "duty" that was expected of him because he had chosen to struggle above the level of the other members of the family weighed down upon him until his-crushed spirit groaned beneath it. Jean was to be a kind of chaperon—a restraining influence!

In the evening, when all the members of the family were gathered together, Robert's decision was made known to them by the mother. It did not come as a surprise to Donald, the father, because, as he said,

the MacWhinnies had been rovers for centuries, and there wasn't a known part of the inhabited globe where the MacWhinnies or one of the immediate offshoots of the family had not left an indelible mark. They would have questioned Jean about her feelings on the proposal, but here Robert intervened. And of all the chivalry that he showed toward his sister, perhaps this part of it was greatest; for he understood completely the drama on which he and she had entered, and he played his part with wonderful subtlety. It was through him—with his lips—that silent Jean reveled in the prospect; through him that she described the glory of sitting with him on the veranda of a Japanese bungalow, of reading with him in the hazy nights, when the cicada were crooning their love songs in the cherry trees; of watching from the near distance the certain progress he would make, of being near him in the moment of his triumph.

Donald MacWhinnie did not concern himself with the feelings of Margaret Drender, nor did the other members of the family. Among them, at that time, there was a spirit of jealousy. Anything that suggested intrusion on what they had come to regard as theirs alone was keenly, yet almost unwittingly, resented. During that week Margaret Drender's name was mentioned only once, and then by David, the youngest brother. He wondered aloud, and in the presence of his mother, what Margaret would think about it all, and why Robert hadn't visited "Jarrow-side." He answered his own questions, by saying musingly: "Maybe Rob thinks he has a big enough family now."

Mrs. MacWhinnie had paused in crossing the floor to listen to David's words. As he made that last remark she drew in a deep breath, as though about to add her opinion; but apparently she deemed it best to let well alone, for all that she said, as she continued her way to the door, was: "Ye haver, David—ye do."

And so, within a week after his arrival from the Far East, Robert MacWhinnie began to repack his oaken chest and portmanteaux, and turn his face to the river leading out to the open sea. And if, now, he was only playing the part of one whose ambition could not be satiated—one whose nervous system would not admit of a moment's bodily rest—he played it like a master of histrionics. Throughout the preparations Jean maintained an attitude of resignation equally calculated to disarm suspicion; she was content to leave everything to this great, broad-shouldered brother who had taken her burden to himself; and the seeming lightness with which he regarded it lessened in her the pain of obligation. Indeed, she became much brighter as the day for sailing approached, and manifested interest in the readings about Japan which her father insisted on giving of an evening.

Robert went out of the house only seldom during that week. Always he was writing. Not for an instant did he raise a fear in Jean's mind that he was suffering any regret for the self-imposed task. So buoyant was he in spirit, and so ready to give laugh for laugh, that she came to believe he was glad of the chance to resume the work that had been left unfinished.

During the week Robert was able to study the bent of each of his brothers, and if he did not come to the conclusion that, without the knowledge of possessing a leaning-post, they might have shown greater promise, it was because of his simple generosity of mind. Even David, the youngest, had come to rest against that post. He, too, was now engaged in the offices of Drender, Masters and Co., and, as his father said, if he paid half the attention to the keeping of the books that he did to the set of his coat and collar, Mr. John Drender received value for money.

"You're growing into a giant of a MacWhinnie," Robert said playfully. "By the time Jean and I come back you'll be a man."

"A married man," put in Jamie slyly. "Dave has a way with him already."

Robert frowned his displeasure at the lightness of the remark.

"When I was David's age——" he began.

David selected a cigarette from a silver case and jauntily placed it between his lips.

"I never work after hours, Rob," he said, with a jerk of the head; and he strutted out of the room to the accompaniment of laughter from Jamie.

Thomas kept his distance during the week; and Robert did not attempt to draw him out of his reserve. Once, he ventured a question about the labor conditions prevailing in the Far East, but added, in a casual way, and before a reply could be given, that he supposed there was sufficient iniquity among the moneyed classes of England to keep him at home for some years to come.

Not one of the brothers conveyed any expression of appreciation of what had been done for them by Robert; the fact that month after month they had enjoyed increased comfort in the home from the liberal portion of his salary which he sent to the parents appeared to have been overlooked. Robert offered no comment on this.

It may truthfully be said that, in the few days prior to sailing again, Robert MacWhinnie showed abundant heroism. But this must be told, and no one, not even Jean, ever knew of it. The night before the ship sailed Robert went down to "Jarrowside." He was closely muffled up, so that none should recognize him, and for two long hours he walked around and about the house, hoping, even praying, that he might catch one glimpse of the woman whose letters he treasured as stepping-stones to triumph. He stood by the gate where she had rested for a moment in his arms; he lived that scene over again—he lived it over a thousand times and more before he saw her again. And in her room, even as he stood there at the gate, Margaret Drender was sitting with his letter crushed in her hand. She misjudged him, as everyone who was dear to him, save Jean, misjudged him throughout his life; but she was too proud in spirit to seek comfort from the rugged ironmaster in the study beneath. Robert MacWhinnie had said very little in his letter, but to a woman of imagination it was easy of expansion.

The ship sailed on the first tide in the morning. The MacWhinnies were gathered on the quay, and as the vessel backed away into mid-river the brothers

gave a final cheer, while Mrs. MacWhinnie wiped the tears out of her eyes with a bonnet string, saying to her husband as she did so: "Donald, man, it's just awfu' to hae bairns, because if they're no breakin' y'r heirt wi' their comings hame, they're breakin' it wi' their gaein's awa'!"

CHAPTER IX

MASTER AND MAN

ALTHOUGH Mr. John Drender was one of the first to be advised of Robert MacWhinnie's departure from Japan, he did not learn of the arrival in England, and the hasty decision to leave it again, until the outward-bound ship must have been breaking into the swells of the Bay of Biscay. His daughter Margaret had not as yet acquainted him with the blow that had been aimed at her, preferring to suffer in silence until she should have had some further letter of explanation from Robert. The news of the arrival and the departure was gathered from the lips of Donald MacWhinnie, and the conversation that took place in the ironmaster's private office at the works is helpful in the study of the relations between master and man—the man whom he was compelled to regard as one having a stronger claim on his sympathies than any of the other employees. It was characteristic of the ironmaster that he learned of—or, rather, guessed at—the sufferings of his daughter without a quiver of the eyelids, or an exclamation that would betray his emotion. In the conversation with Donald MacWhinnie he maintained the attitude of the employer throughout, giv-

ing no sign that he was aware of the attachment between his daughter and Robert. As the little Scotsman came into the office, thoughtfully stroking his short, grizzled beard, Mr. Drender, without looking up, dismissed his secretary, and said: "You may be seated, MacWhinnie."

"I prefer to stand," said the little man.

"As you please," said Mr. Drender. "I was only studying your comfort."

"It's the '*may* be seated' I don't like."

Mr. Drender pushed back his chair and carefully studied the small, flinty eyes.

"You have been with the firm a long while now, MacWhinnie."

"Longer than I care to think about, Mr. Drender—and I seem to be where I started from."

"Whose fault is that?"

"I'm makin' no complaints."

"And I've heard none against you, MacWhinnie—none that I can remember."

"Ye didna send for me to tell me that, Mr. Drender."

"No, I didn't. Dickenson has been here this morning—the foreman of the lathe-shop."

MacWhinnie squinted suspiciously along his nose. There was belligerency in the way he fingered his beard.

"To complain? I'm no certain in my mind that I've had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Dickenson."

"He came to talk to me about your son Thomas."

"Ye might have had a worse subject, Mr. Drender." He was shaping himself for a quarrel.

"In ordinary circumstances I should have had no hesitation in acting on my foreman's advice. As it is, having regard to your long service, I thought I would like to speak to you about him first."

"About Tammass? What's he been doing?"

"To be candid," said Mr. Drender, "your son Thomas would be all the better for a little heart-to-heart talk with his father."

MacWhinnie gave the points of his beard an upward flick—a certain sign of heated temper.

"Tammass is ma first-born, an' I'm ready to hear an' answer onythin' that ony man has to say agin' him. He knows his work—none better."

"I don't doubt that he knows his work, MacWhinnie. Apparently, the only thing he doesn't know is which side his bread is buttered on."

"Ye might ha'e said the same thing about Robert." The little head nodded as to say, "That's one to me."

Mr. Drender frowned impatiently.

"We're not discussing Robert at the moment," he said. "Unfortunately, there's seldom more than one clear head in a family."

"Which is no paying much of a tribute to me, Mr. Drender—me, that brought them up."

"It's because I'm anxious to pay a tribute to your worth, MacWhinnie, that I have sent for you to-day to discuss this trouble about Thomas. He talks too much."

"It's no a sin."

"That depends on his choice of subject, and to whom he talks. Your son Thomas appears to have imbibed a great deal of nonsense, doled out to him,

and those like him, by orange-box orators on a Sunday morning. You should keep him out of the parks, MacWhinnie."

"Tammas is no boy. He's a man. He's older than Robert."

"I think I said just now, MacWhinnie, that we were not discussing Robert."

"If Robert's no less a MacWhinnie than he was a while ago, he would be wi' me in saying that when ye discuss one MacWhinnie ye discuss them a'."

"MacWhinnie, I want you thoroughly to understand that, in sending for you this morning, I broke one of the iron rules of Drender, Masters and Company. I preferred to give another chance to one who had been ear-marked by a trusted foreman."

"I've asked you," said MacWhinnie truculently, "to tell me what it is that Tammas has done. He doesna gae to the park when he should be in the shop."

"No," said Mr. Drender; "but he brings the park to the shop; and if there is one person against whom I set my face it is the sower of discord."

"Tammas is a mischief-maker—is that what ye're telling me?"

"I'm merely repeating to you the information that has been brought to me by one who has been with the firm nearly thirty years, and whose character is as white as that sheet of notepaper before me. Your son Thomas appears to have some grievance. He has been asked to state it, but prefers to go among the men preaching, as I said just now, something very much like rebellion."

"It's the first time I've ever heard of Tammas doing

anything o' the sort. If I have one quiet son, Mr. Drender, it's my boy Tammas. Rebellion? I like that. Mebbe there's mair in it than you think."

"Exactly what I was about to say, MacWhinnie."

"Ay—from Tammas's point o' view. It's no likely that Dickenson——"

"*Mr.* Dickenson, MacWhinnie."

"Then *Mr.* MacWhinnie, Mr. Drender. It's no likely, I was sayin', that your foreman"—he paused, and there was a flash of triumph in his eyes—"would tell ye Tammas's side o' the case."

"I'm not going to argue about the matter, MacWhinnie." And here, also, there was a dramatic pause, with just as much triumph in Mr. Drender's eyes. "Your son Thomas was taken into these works when he was a boy, and he's been shown every consideration by those above him. So far as I am concerned, he may climb his orange boxes and tell every wind of heaven what he thinks about the oppression of labor by capital; but he mustn't do it in my works. Capital—or as much of it as I and my partner represent—provides your son with food and clothing, just so long as he gives an honest return for the money we pay him. If, in his opinion, that wage is too small, let him come into this office, as you have come this morning, and convince us that he's worth more. But it must be understood that, if we cannot have loyalty in a servant, we don't want that servant. And I thought that, in taking this course—in appealing to you, as his father—I was doing a kindness to both of you. Apparently, I was mistaken."

"Ye were no mistaken about Robert, were ye, Mr.

Drender? I suppose that if Robert had no gi'en ye evidence of his ability ye wad ha'e been ready to treat him as ye're treating Tammas now?"

"MacWhinnie, you try my patience."

"Does it no occur to ye, Mr. Drender, that Tammas is no without brains?"

"I'm not concerned with his brains at the moment. I'm disturbed by his stupidity."

"Mebbe, it's because Tammas has mair brains than Robert that ye're so oneasy in your mind. Tammas has a faculty for inventin', Mr. Drender. So had Robert, ye say? Ay, but mebbe Tammas has the brains to keep his inventions to hisself. Does that sink in, Mr. Drender?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you."

"No; but I'll warrant that ye'll think it out before nicht."

"There's no more to be said, MacWhinnie. Al-ready you have been given too much latitude. You may go back to your shop. Again I beg of you to speak to your son Thomas, and advise him that, if he would keep his place in the firm of Drender, Masters and Company, he must learn first to keep a still tongue in his head. Our men are not slaves. We pay the union rate of wages. We endeavor to be considerate to everyone, from the highest to the lowest. That is one of the main principles on which the reputation of the firm has been built up. Drive that into your son's head. Good-morning, MacWhinnie."

"Nay, nay!" said Donald. "I'm no going to be dismissed like that, Mr. Drender. Ye can't insult a faither and stop at 'guid-morning.' I'll speak to Tam-

mas, and I'll advise him that it's about time he placed a richt value on his brains, and found another place where he'd be mair appreciated."

Mr. Drender had resumed his writing. MacWhinnie backed to the door.

"I've already told his faither that," he said defiantly. "I'm leaving Drender, Masters and Company to-day. Mebbe they'll get on without me, mebbe they won't; but I'll no stay here to be insulted, when it's plain to everybody as has the eyes to see"—he raised his voice—"that if it hadna been for Donald MacWhinnie's son Robert the firm of Drender, Masters and Company wouldna be where it is to-day. And ye can let that sink in, Mr. Drender. On'y three days ago I said to Robert——"

The gray head was lifted from the writing-table.

"Ah!" MacWhinnie said sneeringly, "ye didna ken that Robert was hame. And has naebody told ye that he's gone awa' again—before ye or your partner had time to profit further frae the lad's brains?"

Again Mr. Drender picked up his pen.

"Close the door quietly as you go out, MacWhinnie," he said.

That night, and while they were dining alone, as usual, John Drender suddenly looked up at Margaret.

"When did Robert MacWhinnie reach England?" he asked.

She answered him promptly, and without a tremor in her voice.

"You didn't tell me about it?"

"No, father. You were so preoccupied with the Odessa contract."

He muttered "H'm!" and resumed his meal. Then, and with equal suddenness: "When did he go away?"

And again she answered him without betraying herself. She knew that, from under the shelter of his bushy gray eyebrows, he was watching her closely, but she had perfect command of herself.

Mr. Drender bent again to his plate.

"He didn't tell me that he was going back. Quick work, wasn't it?—home and away again within a week?"

The tears were ready to flood into her eyes, but with great courage she mastered them, and prepared to utter the lie that had been framing itself for days.

"It was my wish that he should return," she said.

"Your wish, Margaret?"

"He was doing so splendidly out there, and it seemed—well, the right thing to do: to encourage him, to urge him to greater success. They were anxious that he should go back, although I don't suppose they expected him to return so soon."

"You urged him to go back?"

"He was always so ready to take the advice offered by me—or you."

"What do you think about it now?"

"I think he did the right thing—don't you? He will probably be away another three years. In that time he should be able to lay the foundations of a great future."

John Drender remained silent for a while, but his eyes never left her face. Then, in a voice that throbbed with admiration, he said:

"Margaret, you're a wonderful girl! A level-headed

girl like you is all that a man needs to help him along. Well done, Margaret—and well done, Robert MacWhinnie! Work first!”

Another period of silence; then, as he sipped his coffee, he recalled the incident of the morning.

“I sent for Donald MacWhinnie this morning,” he said, “and I’m sorry now that the conversation took the turn it did, after what you’ve told me.”

“I’m listening, father.” And for the first time she showed some nervousness.

“It was a very different MacWhinnie from the one I knew some years ago. I sent for him to advise him about his son Thomas.”

“Robert’s elder brother?”

John Drender nodded.

“He’s been making a fool of himself—agitating the men. He has what his kinsfolk call a bee in the bonnet, and I hoped that when his father had heard me, he’d do his best to get rid of it. But, oh, no! He took the wrong attitude. He was rude and resentful. The truth is, Margaret, that Robert MacWhinnie must expect to carry the whole family on his back. They’re living on his success. . . . He was *very* rude, and gave me to understand that to-day would be the last day he would spend with the firm.”

Her cheeks had become pale of a sudden.

“Father, you don’t mean that?”

“And if he hadn’t given me his notice, I would have given it to him; and Thomas will follow him to-morrow.”

“Father”—she moved to his chair, rested her hands

on his shoulders, and looked away from him—"do you want to please me more than ever before?"

"What is it, Margaret?"

"I want you to write to Donald MacWhinnie, and withdraw everything you said about his son Thomas. And I want you to ask Thomas in a quiet way to go on with his work, and bring any grievance he may have before you, so that it may be inquired into."

"My dear Margaret!" He half turned, so that she couldn't avoid his eyes. "Do you know what you're asking?"

"I have a reason for it—a strong reason."

"You're thinking of Robert, and of what he'll think."

"Yes, I'm thinking of Robert, and of what he'll think; and it's because I know what he'll think that I want you to do as I have suggested."

"You can't be serious, Margaret! You wouldn't have me apologize to the likes of them?"

"It wouldn't be an apology; at least, not to those intelligent enough to understand your relative positions. And I would much rather you apologize than seem to be mean and spiteful."

His manner changed at once.

"You shall have your own way, little girl."

And as she went to her own room that night, the kindly look in his eyes deceived her.

There *was* something wrong, he said to himself.

CHAPTER X

TEARS BEHIND THE SMILES

A WOMAN is never so lovable as when she is trying to deceive the world about her own unhappiness. During the few weeks immediately following the departure of Robert MacWhinnie and his sister, Margaret Drender crept closer than ever to the heart of her father. Not once in that time did she give him an opportunity to question her. Throughout the day the laughter of the wind as it swept up the river was in her voice; only the sun was reflected in her great dark eyes. Courage is the prerogative of woman, no matter what the claims of man. Margaret completely deceived the gray old ironmaster, who secretly guessed at a rupture. She almost deceived herself.

And then came his letter. In a measure it was expected by her, for even in those moments when she had tried her hardest to steel her heart against him, she could not accuse him of cowardice; he was bound to write something. If it were only a threadbare excuse, he would write it. The letter came on a morning when she was wondering how much longer she would be able to keep up the deceit of indifference, when she was doubting her strength of mind to go through an-

other day with a smile in her eyes and a pain in her heart. And although the letter left her practically where she was, it palliated the pain.

"S. S. Hikasa Maru.

"COLOMBO.

"MY DEAR MARGARET.—Every day since we left Tilbury I have sat down in the quiet of my cabin to write this letter, and the task has been as great a torture as the reading of the letter must be to you. Your love—the love that I joyed in—the love that showed me the stars when all else was dark and forbidding, must be changed to scorn. You must in your heart believe that God would have been kinder had we never been allowed to meet, to know each other, to share the confidences of each other. You are gone from me. I know that. I feel it. I have sacrificed that which I held most dear, and yet, even in this calm which comes after the storm of impulse, even now, when I can sit alone and reflect on all that has happened, I feel that if you were cognizant of the facts, your love, instead of changing to scorn, would be deepened. And I dare not plead for a continuance of that love, for even you, my Margaret, must not be privy to my thoughts. Would that you could think of me as on that dear night when first I held you in my arms.

"I am on my way back to the Far East, where work awaits me, and Jean, my beloved sister, is accompanying me. She seems to be very happy. Only a few minutes ago I heard her voice, singing an old Scottish ballad that we used to sing as children. I want her to be happy. I know that you, with your great heart, would like her to be happy. Out yonder she is going to be my housekeeper. I listen to her talking of the prospect with my heart aching. Is it possible for you to believe this: When I arrived in England a few weeks ago my heart was bursting for sight of you. I remember that when first the white cliffs of Dover broke through the haze of morning as we steamed up the Channel, I leaned over the side and held out my arms toward them; it was your dear face that I saw, your arms that were held out to mine. In the East I had applied myself to work even

as you had wished. With the promise of your dear self before me I set out to achieve that which would have seemed hopeless of achievement without your love and encouragement. Among the whites out yonder I was known as 'The lucky dog.' They had no such stimulus as I possessed. I used to laugh at their envy—good-natured envy. I wonder if I shall be able to laugh now. They will call me 'The lucky dog' again, for I mean to work as I never worked before. If they only knew!

"Margaret, bear with me a little while. When I reached the river on my way home it was as though the whole world had moved aside to show me you, awaiting me. And yet I left the country without seeing you, without exchanging a single word. The short note I dispatched to 'Jarrowside' was terrible in its brevity. You must have thought that for three years I had been devising the letter that would hurt the most. But if I had seen you, Margaret, I could not have done that which I have done, and I am satisfied that the task I have undertaken was meant for me. How easy it is to encourage fatalism! I am beginning to believe that in the beginning some men and some women are deliberately chosen for sacrifice that others may be guided—chosen, not because of omissions, but because they are regarded as the right and proper instruments. Are they to be rewarded for those sacrifices? Does God mean that a man or a woman shall undergo pain and suffering without their having merited it? . . . Oh! I could fight this out to a thousand conclusions, but I must learn so to school myself that the joy of the last three years will stand as the reward in advance of the duty undertaken.

"How I loved you, Margaret—loved you as I believe few men could have loved! And you loved me. I was happy in that knowledge. Margaret, dare I ask you to go on believing? Dare I suggest that the greatest test of a woman's love for a man is her profound belief in him until, from his own lips, not from his actions, she learns the truth?"

"ROBERT."

* * * * *

If Margaret could have seen Robert MacWhinnie writing that letter, or overheard what followed when

Jean came to interrogate him on it, she might have been kinder in her reply. . . .

The ship had dropped anchor within Colombo Harbor at sunrise. At nine o'clock Jean, dressed in white and reveling in the wonders of the most beautiful garden in the world, came to him while he was on deck, with a proposal that they should go ashore. For the first time since they left England he refused her request; but, rather than that she should be disappointed, he arranged for her to join a party of passengers; and as she went over the side, he told her to enjoy herself to the full, and that by the time she returned he would have finished all his correspondence, and if there were time they would dine that evening at the Galle Face Hotel.

"So don't exhaust all your interest in Colombo, Jean," he said cheerfully. "The real beauties of this island are never apparent until nightfall. Wait till you see the moon hanging over the town like a silver lantern, and the stars so clear and near to you that you feel you want to reach up and steal them from their setting. I have already promised the first officer to go ashore with him when the cargo is finished with and the hatches closed. We'll have a ricksha' ride by moonlight, and we'll select the bungalow we mean to settle in when all the work is finished, and we can bring the family out. So, off you go, and don't worry about me. There are piles and piles of letters to be written, and the homeward-bound mail boat will be in to-morrow, just before we sail."

And, as the launch blustered its way across the water to the landing-stage, Robert went down below,

and commenced the hardest task he had yet undertaken.

It was late in the afternoon when he heard Jean's voice calling to him from the alleyway outside the cabin. She had returned, hot and flushed and full of the wonders of the island.

"Robert, man, are you not finished yet? Here's the purser asking for letters. They must go ashore to-night."

"Coming, Jean!" he called back. "My letters will be posted, even if I have to swim ashore." He closed down his letter, gathered up the few others of a business nature that lay on his table, and hurried out. Jean wanted to take them to the agent herself, but he clung to them with suspicious tightness. The letters were handed over to the agent. The launch whistled her "Good night" to the ship, and with the sigh of one who feels that the greatest labor of his life is concluded, Robert slipped his arm round Jean's waist, and they went for'ard to watch the swift coming of night and listen to the crooning of the island, quarter of a mile away. They had an hour in which to talk and dream, before it would be necessary to dress for their visit to the hotel.

Jean, who had been very reserved since leaving England, suddenly rested her hand on his. Darkness had come with tropical swiftness, so that he could not clearly distinguish her face; but the throb in her voice told him how deeply she had been thinking, and how feigned had been her joy throughout the day.

"You wrote some very long letters, Robert," she whispered.

"Not very long, Jean; but a spanner is more familiar to my fingers than a pen."

"I knew you were going to write a lot of letters."

"How did you know that?"

"Because you've been writing them ever since you left home—writing them in your mind. I've seen your lips moving, even when you have been lying back in a deck chair pretending to be asleep."

"Jean, woman, you're suffering from the effects of the tropical night! That sky, and the music of that sea, and the aroma of spices would turn a dictionary into a romance."

"And you're an awfully good actor, Robert. To see you lying there with your eyes half closed, anyone would think that your mind was at peace with the world."

"Well, isn't it? Shouldn't it be at peace? Haven't I every reason to be happy?"

"Robert, dear, don't let me think that you have so poor an opinion of me. You're not saying to yourself, 'She's happy because she believes me to be happy?' You're not thinking that because I smile and run about the decks all day, and talk and make myself agreeable to the other passengers—you're not thinking that I'm putting a mean price on what you've done for me?"

"My dear Jean, I've done for you only what any brother would do for his sister."

"Ah, no, Robert! You've done something so big that I can't yet estimate it. I have been wondering if I shall ever estimate it rightly. . . . Have you written to Margaret?"

"Naturally."

"And not so naturally, either, Robert. I know that you've been trying to write to her every minute of the weeks we've been away."

"I told you I'm not good at writing."

"No, and you're not good at forgetting, either."

"I'm afraid you are, Jean, because I told you distinctly that it was Margaret's wish that I should go back to the Far East."

"You didn't tell me that you'd seen her."

"Jean, you've a very bad memory. I told you that I was going down to Jarrowside."

"But did you go, Robert?"

"Why should you worry your head about it?"

"I'll tell you why, Robert. It's because I've been wondering lately how much a sister has a right to expect from a brother."

"Jean, didn't you promise me, a few minutes after we cast off at Tilbury, that not until I broached the subject should it be mentioned again?"

She lay back on the chair, and said, very slowly, but with great determination:

"I, myself, shall write to Margaret."

Instantly he gripped her wrist.

"That will be a poor reward for anything I may have done," he said. "I don't wish you to write to her. Margaret and I thoroughly understand each other. Now promise me again that you will do no such thing."

She was silent for a moment, and the light of the moon showed him the tears in her eyes.

"It's a simple promise to make, Jean," he urged gently.

"You loved Margaret, Robert?"

"I love her now."

"You'll never love another woman as you love her?"

"No, I don't think so."

"And there's only one thing you love more than life."

He looked the question.

"I mean your honor, Robert; the honor of the MacWhinnies."

He did not answer, and she took his silence for an affirmative. With the tears streaming down her cheeks, she said brokenly:

"I understand, Robert. That is why you're taking me away."

And Robert MacWhinnie said to himself: "So long as she understands that, she will not attempt to write to anyone at home."

The quartermaster came along the deck.

"Mr. Tyson's compliments, sir, and he will be ready to go ashore within half an hour."

"My compliments to Mr. Tyson," said Robert firmly. "We shall be ready. Come, Jean."

CHAPTER XI

TEMPERAMENT

MARGARET DRENDER'S reply to Robert's letter reached him a month after he landed at Kobe. It was very short, and contained no more and no less than he expected. It was addressed to him at the shipping agent's office, and he carried it unopened in his pocket for an hour before he had the courage to break the seal.

"No one" [she wrote] "could doubt the sincerity of your letter. But if you loved me as you say you did, and do, is there proof of that love in your reluctance to take me into your confidence? If I could not have helped you in your difficulty, whatever it is, at least I could not have made it greater. You ask me to believe in you until I have learned the truth from your own lips. I will; because, whatever happens now, it cannot make any difference. But, Robert, you are asking a great deal of a woman. When you wrote your letter, had you in your mind the fear that this separation was to be for all time? Had you in your mind the belief that as the years crept in between, the pain would be forgotten—the pain, not only of the heart, but of the mind, the pain of humbled pride? If that was your idea, I will for a moment put my modesty aside, and ask you to remember that I was not a girl when your letter came."

By this time Jean's sorrow had been partially forgotten in the joyous contemplation of her new surroundings. While at Nagasaki Robert had been able

to arrange for the tenancy of a bungalow on the eastern fringe of Kobe, and under the brow of the hill that looks across the harbor; so that when they reached the port there was no necessity to stay at a hotel and court the inquisitiveness of any Europeans who might be staying there. He put it in another way when speaking to her about it, fearing to awaken sadnesses. It was with the delighted laughter of a child that she went from room to room. It was the doll's house of her girlhood dreams—the house in which the dolls were actually alive. The quaint little charcoal stove, the hibachi, the little shrine in the corner, the lily-white rice mats, and, above all, the doll, O Yucha San, who had served the previous tenant two years, and had eagerly awaited the arrival of the MacWhinnies from Nagasaki. Jean surveyed the little kneeling figure in sheer delight, and begged Robert to keep talking to the girl so that she might listen to her tongue. In the compound there was the most fairy-like of gold-fish ponds, fringed by dwarf plum trees and ferns. From the steps of the veranda a perfect panorama of sea and land spread itself out; and of an evening, when the masthead lights of incoming ships twinkled like so many stars—when the scream and hum of the cicada deepened the romance of the atmosphere, Jean felt that the other world had passed away and life was beginning anew.

Jean was in the compound behind the bungalow when Robert returned from the shipping office with Margaret's letter in his pocket. The little Japanese maid, who had been sitting with her and endeavoring to teach her the rudiments of the native language,

shuffled backward out of hearing as he came on to the veranda and called to his sister. He had not told her why he went to the shipping office, but she shrewdly guessed at the nature of his errand. And narrowly she scrutinized his open face for any sign of depression. But it was in a cheery voice that he called to her, and as he flung his topee on the rice-matted floor he signaled to her to come up from the garden and listen to the news he had for her.

"Jean, girl, I'm going to leave you to yourself for three or four days. Any objection?"

She shook her head; but there was an anxious look on her face.

"There you are," he said, almost boisterously, as he flung a letter toward her. "Read it, if you can."

It was in Japanese, and gravely she handed it back.

"Come," he laughed, "for what am I paying O Yucha San ten yen a month, if you haven't yet mastered the simplest language in the world?"

"Who interpreted it for you, Robert?"

"Never mind," he laughed. "I have a translation here. I'm going down to Tokio to see one of the government officials, and I shall be away no more than four days at the most. I shall then know what I am going to do during the next six months at least. From what I have been able to gather, these people are intent on pushing the railway to the northwest of the island as fast as possible, and the amusing part of it is that they have no reason for it, or, rather, none that they care to divulge, even to Robert MacWhinnie. Oh, they're an amazing people, but not nearly so clever

as they imagine themselves to be! Still, that's not our concern, is it, Jean?"

"No, Robert." She was watching him with set eyes. What he had already said hadn't interested her in the slightest. She was waiting for something which she knew he would not tell her.

"Our concern is to give them brains for their money. Isn't that it, Jean? And when we've sold enough of the commodity, back we go. I'm still keen on Colombo. It's time the MacWhinnies took up their estate there. You'll be all right, Jean? I'll arrange with O Yucha San to look after you, and I've already seen the *serjeant de ville*, as my old acquaintance Hiraki likes to call himself. You need have no fear, for the burglars in this country are very discriminating. They seldom get farther than the servants' quarters."

"When are you going, Robert?"

"To-night. It's a long train journey—thirty-six hours and more, but the sooner I start, the sooner it will be finished. Now, help me to pack."

She obeyed like any well-trained housekeeper, not forgetting a single article her mother would have thought of had she been sending him away. And she went to the station with him, and laughed and jested while she stood with him awaiting the departure of the train. She promised him that before he saw her again she would know as much about the language as he could wish her to know, and she kissed him with all the love of a sister, assuring him that he need have no anxiety about her while he was away; and her "Sayonara" rang with hope and happiness.

He returned to Kobe five days later, arriving late at night. He had telegraphed to Jean the time of his arrival, and, although he did not expect her to be awaiting him at the station, he was greatly surprised to find the bungalow in complete darkness. He dismissed his jinrickisha boy, and went quickly up the veranda steps. The sliding door was unlocked. As he set his foot across the threshold, he called out in a nervous voice: "Jean, where are you?"

He fancied that he heard a movement in their little sitting room, and he turned quickly and walked in, striking a vesta as he went.

Jean was there—seated at the table—and before the flame of the match died out, he marked the hollowness of her cheeks, the haggard, weary look in her eyes.

"Jean, light the lantern!" he cried, trying to appear calm.

But it was he, himself, who lit it. Then, as he turned again in her direction, the deep red light of the paper lantern resting on her face, he held up his hands in alarm.

"What has happened, Jean? Why don't you speak?"

She had put on a grav silk kimono; the folds of her hair had not been unfastened, but it was all loose, as though in pain she had continually brushed it back with her hands.

"Why are you sitting here in the darkness?" He approached her chair, holding out a hand imploringly. "Jean, have you gone out of your mind? Why do you sit there staring at me in that manner? I ask you, why

are you sitting here in the darkness, and what has happened?"

And before she could answer he understood. The agitation of his mind passed. He became calm, terribly calm, in an instant.

"Jean, my bonnie girl," he said soothingly, and leaned over the table toward her, "give it to me."

She raised her right hand, and very gently he took the pistol from it.

"Where did you get this—this toy from?"

"O Yucha San."

"Now, show me what you have in the other hand." And mechanically she brought that into the light, and showed him the crumpled note paper. He took it from her. It was Margaret Drender's letter, which had been addressed to the shipping office.

"The servants are out, I suppose?" he said.

She moved her head very slightly.

"You sent them away for the night."

He went across the floor, lit a second lantern, and brought it near the table. Then he sat down, and, placing his elbows on the table, rested his chin in his hands, looking at her intently the while.

"I thought you were much stronger than that, Jean," he said sadly. "I thought your love for me was greater. Did you try to think what my feelings would be, had—had anything happened? . . . This letter—where did you find it? In my pocket, I suppose, when you came to brush my clothes? You must have done that the morning after I left. How long have you been sitting there making up your mind what to do?"

"Since yesterday morning, Robert."

"You've been here alone since yesterday morning? And in all that time you never thought of me and my feelings?"

"It's because you haven't been out of my mind since yesterday morning."

"Did you really mean to take your life?"

"Why should I rob you of yours?"

"Who told you that you'd robbed me of mine?"

"Of your happiness, your hopes."

"Have I ever shown you that I was unhappy? Have I ever said anything that would lead you to believe that my hopes were not even greater now than ever they were?"

"It is because you haven't said anything that I meant to do it. It's because I know that all this time you've been acting, you've been sacrificing yourself. It was I who sinned, not you, Robert. Why should you pay the penalty?"

"Who told you that you'd sinned?"

"Else, why did you bring me away?"

"To be my housekeeper; to make this exile—for it is exile—less lonely. There was no one in the world whom I would have preferred to you."

"You're saying that because——"

"Because what, Jean?"

"Because you're my brother—that's all. I don't believe that you, yourself, realize what you've given up for me."

"It was my duty, Jean."

"Rob, don't say that!"

"No, not my duty. It was because of the love I have for you."

"No one else—the others wouldn't have done it."

"You never loved the others as you loved me. Jean, do you mean to tell me that you've forgotten the time when we were boy and girl? Have you forgotten that Saturday afternoon, in Ballyhoustie, when Sandy MacCormick made my nose bleed, and you 'paid' him with your own bare hands? Have you forgotten the time when we were lost together, on the Haddington moors?"—he slipped naturally into the accent of his youth—"when we had to stay out a' the nicht, and ye took off your wee bit petticoat and wrapped it around me? Have ye forgotten how we used to read together, and you drew 'Robert MacWhinnie as a boy, Robert MacWhinnie as a man, and Robert MacWhinnie as a millionaire'? Oh, Jean, have you forgotten all that? Because not a single incident of those days has left my memory. Why, when I was out here before, sitting alone in a place just like this, I used to talk to you—to your memory. And you were ready to do this—this thing to-night!"

She had dropped her head on her arm, and her sobs shook the table. He left his chair and went over to her, placing his arm around her neck and raising her head so that he could press cheek against cheek.

"Jean, my bonnie lass," he whispered tenderly, "I know all that you're suffering, but I want you to believe that there are bright days ahead. You've robbed me of nothing. I still have my hopes and ambitions, and it's work that I want, Jean. I want to be big and important—ay! as important as old Baillie MacGrath

of Ballyhoustie, and ye mind how important he was! Jean, it's just grand to realize that I have so fine a sister! I should never have done the work that I have done if it hadn't been for you, and I shouldn't attempt what I'm going to attempt in the future, if you were not here with me."

"It's the shame, Robert, the shame."

And he could tell by the depth of her voice how acute was the mental pain.

"I've thought of all that," he said softly, hoping to pacify her.

"And it's not right that my shame should be visited on you."

"Would it have helped, if I had arrived too late to-night? Jean, you must never again allow your mind to get into this state. The shame that you speak of is one that—one that your Maker would understand. The other that you contemplated is one that you couldn't expect Him to forgive."

"But why are you doing this for me? Why should you do it?"

"For only one reason: You're my sister."

She hesitated, and, covering her eyes again, said plaintively: "You're not doing it, Robert, because of the disgrace to you if it were known at home?"

"No," he said, very firmly.

"Then, tell me, Robert, what is your plan? What have you in your mind?"

"At present, nothing; although the news I was bringing you was helping me to think. We're leaving Kobe at once. I'm going up to Sendai, to take charge of a couple of hundred native engineers—bridge-

building. You and I are going, Jean. Probably you'll be the only white woman there. It will be lonely for you."

"It couldn't be lonely, Robert, with you."

"That's the way to look at it. We shall be up there probably some months. The government are doing everything they can for our comfort."

"*Our* comfort, Robert?"

"They understand that my sister is with me. To-morrow we shall see about the packing up." He repeated the word "to-morrow," paused, and looked at her. "What a to-morrow it would have been for me, Jean, if——"

She rose from her chair, and placed her arms around his neck.

"Robert," she whispered, "will you kiss me?"

He held her tightly in his arms, and kissed her brow again and again.

"I shall always think of—to-morrow," she said. "Robert, you've shamed me."

"No, not shamed you, Jean," he answered. "I've only tried to open your eyes, for if there's work out here for me to do, there's work for you."

"God give me work!" she said, and hid her face against his breast.

In a little while, and when her sobs had ceased, he led her to her room, and in the absence of the servants unrolled her rice-mat. He kissed her good night, and went back to the sitting room. He filled his pipe, lit it, turned out the lanterns, and went onto the veranda.

Dawn was breaking, and, as he watched, a full-rigged ship sailed from beyond the rim of the ocean

full into the crimson light of the breaking day—sailed with white wings stretched full out to the welcome wind, like a great bird of hope, nearing the long-sought haven.

CHAPTER XII

PAINTED HOURS

THAT scene in the bungalow at Kobe was never again referred to by Robert, although on many occasions Jean sought to plumb the depths of his mind. But it was characteristic of him that, having once set a seal on something which he intended to be closed, nothing could induce him to break it. None could have doubted the intensity of his grief on that night, but once the word of contrition had been spoken, once the promise had been given that never again would her mind turn in that direction, he freed himself of it all, and just as the sun breaks through the darkness of night, so his ambition and natural brightness broke through the darkness of what had almost been a tragedy. His strength of mind and unfailing optimism was infectious, and long before Sendai was reached Jean had recalled some of the lightness of her girlhood days. The natural wonders of the country through which they traveled stirred her to outbursts of admiration, and, although it was all very old and familiar to Robert, he derived a new joy from looking at it through her eyes. Always he was promising her that it was nothing to what she should see. The evenings she loved the best, when the orange and

amber sunsets made appeal to all that was artistic in her.

On the outskirts of Sendai, a bungalow had been placed at their disposal, and almost immediately they settled down to what Robert declared was to be the work of his lifetime. Those early days in Sendai were full of promise, and Jean, as if in atonement for the pain she had caused him at Kobe, threw her whole heart into the duties of housekeeper. Often he wondered aloud how he had managed without her, or how he could hope to manage in the future if she were not with him. She loved the new country to which he had brought her, and learned to assimilate customs in weeks where he had floundered in years.

"Never be able to manage without you, Jean," he would murmur, as she flitted about the veranda, arranging his papers, or gathering together his models.

"But I shall always be with you, Robert," she would say, and his reply, half in jest, never varied: "It's all a matter for yourself, Jean."

Oh, they were beautiful days of dreams and newly planted hopes. It may be that, in the minds of those who look upon these two from afar, there is a halting fear that in Jean's nature there was a seed of selfishness that developed as the days wore on. But who shall blame her? Perhaps, if Robert had hinted at the presence of such a seed, she would have shown by her next action that she, herself, had been unaware of it; but in everything that he said and did there was the warmth of a love that neither could estimate.

Wonderful days and wonderful nights, when all the romance of an eastern sky and climate crept into

their very souls, all the picturesqueness of the most picturesque country in the world making appeal to their sense of the beautiful. For reasons which he plausibly explained to her, he made no attempt to cultivate the acquaintance of the few Europeans engaged in business in Sendai. His work was of such a character that throughout the day it was essential that he should concentrate the whole of his thoughts upon it, and in the evening he was too tired, physically and mentally, to do more than rest on a rattan chair and listen to Jean as she read, or sang, or wrote letters aloud—a habit of hers. Jean never allowed a mail to leave without a letter from her to the people at home, and sometimes, when she paused in the writing of one, and the tears gushed to her eyes, he would take the pen from her fingers and complete the task himself.

The railway was being constructed with all possible haste, and under him Robert had over two hundred natives. The route kept to the coastline far beyond Sendai, and the bridge-building that had to be undertaken demanded the most careful of workmanship. When Jean and Robert arrived at Sendai, they found the work in charge of a European engineer, a Scot like themselves. He had taken over the duties temporarily, and was awaiting Robert with impatience. A little, weazened man of sixty, he welcomed the brother and sister with the enthusiasm that he would have shown had he heard the skirl of the bagpipes, and both of them could well understand the flooded eyes and the peculiar little breaks in his voice when he told them that they were the first Scots he had met in ten years. His name was MacConnachie, and he

came from Kilmarnock. He had been in the East nearly thirty years, and yet there wasn't a family in the town of Kilmarnock whose name he didn't remember. Jean asked him if he were going home, he having told her that he had made as much as he was likely to need. He shook his head, and with an accent so broad and homelike that it brought a sob into Jean's throat, he said he feared that long association with the East had made him a foreigner to his own people. He was returning to Nagasaki, where he intended to take over the license of a tea garden. There, he said, he would end his days, watching the ships come in, watching the "Blue Peter" go up, "and sighin' like a wee bit lassie."

During the few days that he remained before relinquishing everything to Robert, MacConnachie spent a great deal of time in the MacWhinnie bungalow; and he helped more than anyone else to give Jean an insight into the native mind which was to strengthen her in the days to come against the fears and forebodings which were natural in her.

"For five years," MacConnachie said, "I was at worrk away up in Canton. I like the Chinamen mair than I like these people; but I found that while I could manage a hundred Chinks wi' a full-hearted flow of Glasgie-Irish an' a monkey-wrench, I could do anything wi' these people so long as I made them believe that I had mair brains than themsel's."

Robert, after the departure of MacConnachie, was the only European engaged on the work of construction, but from the Government engineering shops at Kure had been sent a number of young men educated

in England and Germany. They worked under him as his immediate subordinates, and, although, as he told Jean with a smile, they were there for the express purpose of profiting from his knowledge as an engineer, both he and she found their companionship a comfort in the long weeks when rain and frequent earthquakes interfered with the progress of the railway work. The principal of these young men of the New Japan was Taro Yuchi, who, by reason of his perfect command of English and his poetic fancies, seemed to become almost indispensable to the MacWhinnie household. For Robert he had a respect that amounted almost to reverence; Jean might have been an empress, and her accent, given free rein on occasions, the most wonderful music that had ever broken on his ears. In those days, when the demands of the railway work occupied most of his time and attention, Robert was very grateful for the friendship of Taro Yuchi and the little circle of subordinates who gathered at his bungalow of an evening.

Robert's one great fear was now for Jean. While he never gave any sign of allowing his thoughts to dwell on that night in Kobe, while he was always bright and cheerful in her presence, yet was he tortured by thoughts of the future. There were days to come when her courage would be tested with greater severity. He hardly dared to think about those days, and whenever she gave him the impression that her own mind was wandering in that direction, he quickly evolved some topic or controversy that would tend to divert her thoughts. It was very seldom that her mood aroused those fears in him. It was as though

she had secretly reproached herself for the lack of gratitude shown at Kobe, and had determined to do her best to brighten the voluntary exile. From out of the past she might have recalled the joyous temperament which had made her so beloved of him in the Ballyhoustie days; indeed, she appeared to have made up her mind to show him how great was her appreciation of all that he had done for her, and to make his self-sacrifice less of a burden to him. She might have had no thought of the future; she was just a laughing Scottish girl, and he was the one man in the world that mattered.

The work of constructing the railway helped to keep Robert's mind from thoughts that would be likely to betray his feelings. Although he had laid the foundations of success during his three years in the country, there was a reputation to maintain. This strip of country through which the line was to be carried presented so many natural difficulties that no greater test of his skill as an engineer could have been imposed. Many times did he and Taro Yuchi, the second in command, sit out on the veranda of the bungalow, wrestling with the problems before them, until the stars paled and the drapings of the morning sun were drawn aside.

In addition to the topographical difficulties, the human element had to be considered, and here it was that Jean discovered in herself a strength that was to help him when the trouble came. The number of men placed at Robert's disposal was far from being sufficient, and the authorities, imbued with vast ambitions, but lacking financial resource, trimmed their expendi-

ture with laudable economy but deplorable tact. The natives engaged on the work of construction were miserably paid, unfair advantage being taken of the new spirit of patriotism that had come to stir the semi-moribund life of the nation. The community of workers was housed in the most primitive manner imaginable, and, although something like organization was attempted, the strain on Robert MacWhinnie's courage became greater as the weeks went by. There were swamps to be crossed, which meant greater vigilance on the part of the two or three medical students sent up from Tokio; and as Robert was compelled to superintend the energies even of these auxiliaries, he had little time for rest. During the first two months, there was a great deal of sickness in the camp, and it was here that Jean found a new field, a new niche of which she had never dreamed. O Yucha San, her little Kobe maid, would have remained on her knees for days in admiration and awe could she have marked the amazing progress which Jean made in the study of the native language. More than that, she had entered so deeply into the character of the people that, within three months, she understood what was much more important than language—the temperament of the people among whom she and her brother had come to live. When sickness fell on the camp, she begged Robert to allow her to interrogate the pathetically incompetent medical staff, to find out how far they were able to combat the common enemy, and to aid them with her advice in matters of segregation and nursing generally. Before the dread of this half-expected handicap had left Rob-

ert's mind free to deal with the main work before him, the outbreak of sickness had passed, and "O Jean San" had been raised to a dazzlingly white throne in the primitive minds of the native toilers.

But the work had been retarded, and Robert made repeated requests to the authorities for additional labor. The response was excessive politeness, without a refusal, and without additional labor. The official Japanese, who keeps his position so long as he obeys orders and never gives affront, has an indescribable faculty for making a pleader feel ashamed of his own plea; he can garnish a refusal with so much flowery language and delightful politeness that the "no" becomes more desirable than a "yes."

Robert pushed on bravely, content to place reliance on the patriotism of the men under him. He was less observant than Jean, who warned him on innumerable occasions that patriotism can stand any test save that of actual want. "Robert, man," she would say when they fell to discussing this aspect of the work, "according to your expense sheets, you're paying these men an average of fifty sen a day—a shilling—and you expect them to drag their bones through swamps and risk all the dangers of a treacherous climate for that. Dinna fling out your excuses about patriotism, because patriotism is no fattening eno' for them. Patriotism and a full stomach gae togither."

Jean was a world of sunshine in herself when the clouds threatened Robert's sky, and, perhaps, he was too absorbed in the work before him to pay tribute to the greatness of her spirit in those Sendai months. There might have been no shadow creeping toward

her; she gave no sign of anticipating it. He never saw a tear in her eyes during the two months after leaving Kobe until that morning when he came back from the cutting unexpectedly.

And, again, it was a letter—or, rather, many letters—that had torn the mask from her face. Letters from home! Letters to Robert, upon whom the family leaned. One from Mrs. MacWhinnie:

“You must be getting a sight of money, Rob, and it’s grand to think that your own stand first. We thank you for the fifty pounds. John Drender’s cashier was in the bank when I went with your father to get the money, and we just flashed the bit papers in his face. Did you hear from your father how Drender wanted to play the high and mighty because you had brains and the sense to keep them in the family? He’ll never forgive your father for letting you go back so as he couldn’t pluck you any more. Was all for turning your father and Tammass away from his works, he was, but your father soon showed him what was what. Don’t say anything to Jean about it; she has had worry enough, and we hope this holiday will do her good. We owe a deal to Jean, Rob; I’ve realized that sin you went away. The boys are awful good to their mother, and Tammass is doing that splendid with the speaking. We shall all be proud of the lad yet, and I hear, although he hasn’t said anything to his mother, yet, that a fine bit lassie has her eye on him. Jean’ll know her—Maggie Drummond; her father came from Glasgow a year before you came back from abroad.”

And there was a letter from David, thanking Robert for the check which had settled his “trouble” nicely; and a bundle of crude drawings from the father, who was certain that he had invented an “eye-opener,” and wondered what Robert thought about the traveling

crane, and whether he felt inclined to put down the money for the models.

Jean had come on the letters in the same way that she had found the Kobe one, and she held them toward him with the tears raining down her cheeks.

"My heart's just bleeding for ye, Rob," she sobbed. "Is it no enough that ye should have my trouble to bear?"

"Jean," he warned her, somewhat sternly, "I shall burn all the letters immediately after reading them, if you persist in allowing them to make you unhappy. Why"—he lowered his voice—"I was beginning to believe that you'd seen the silver lining of the cloud, and that you understood how perfectly content I am."

"That's like you, Rob," she said, drying her eyes. "But so many things creep up to remind me of the past, even if I do sometimes bring myself to forget."

"And, Jean," he said, with a sigh, "your gratitude would be all the more convincing if you said no more about it. My mind's just filled with the work that's going on here. If only I could persuade these people to let me have double the staff, I could put this job through in half the contract time; and what a feather in my cap that would be! And, Jean, there's something else to live for out here."

She threw him a look of inquiry—he had taken to pacing the floor.

"I had decided not to say anything to you about it until the evidences were stronger; I didn't want to raise false hopes."

"False hopes, Robert? What about?"

"Yuchi was the first to convey the information. He

is a clever little fellow, and, although he has no conception of the importance of the discovery, he seems to understand that we're on a pretty good thing, if only we can get the authorities to grant the concessions we intend to seek."

"Robert, are you talking like this just to turn my thoughts?"

"No. I'm going to tell you of something that ought to strengthen you in your determination to forget the past and to march onward. Jean, my girl, you and I have never thrashed out this trouble together, and I don't intend to do so now, because if I said to you that I thought nothing of it, that it was nothing, a matter of indifference, you wouldn't believe me; and I can't tell you that it is something so terrible that all the world would be justified in turning its back upon you. But I do insist that in all the circumstances you have no right to see only the dark side of everything. After all, Jean, I owe a great deal to you. I wish you could realize that. Call it what you will—telepathy, transmission of thought, or inspiration—I know only this: that when you're about, when I can hear your voice, I feel brighter, my brain works more actively."

"Was there ever such a man!" she murmured.

"Now, this thing that has happened, or is going to happen. For the first time since I commenced to earn an appreciable salary, I regretted that it had been necessary to send so much to the old people. If I could put my hand on all that I have sent to them during the last few years, I might be an immensely rich man in less than twelve months from now. But that's the luck of the MacWhinnies."

"It's not like you to regret what you've done for them."

"I'm not complaining, Jean; only it's hard to be led right up to the verge of wealth and not to be allowed to stretch forth a hand to take some of it. Still, I'm not complaining, as I said just now. I am in a position to put my hand on a certain amount, and Taro Yuchi has several influential friends in Tokio who, he says, will come forward at the right moment."

"But for what, Robert? What is it that you're talking about?"

"We touched coal the other day. There's no doubt about it—coal! And unless I'm greatly mistaken, the seam runs for miles, and near the surface."

"And what then?" Her eyes were glowing with wonder.

"What then, Jean? If we can obtain a concession from the Government to mine the district—well, you wouldn't be able to calculate the worth of it as the result of two years' working. Yuchi discovered it. I'll give him credit for that. I was the first that he took into his confidence. I once rendered a little service to Yuchi—a very small matter—but I don't think he'll ever forget it. There's a lot in that old injunction of casting your bread upon the waters. . . . Anyway, you keep that to yourself, and as soon as there's any development of the project you shall know all about it. Try to think of it, Jean, as something to live for, and that'll keep your mind off other matters. Now, having dried those tears, I've something else to tell you. Three or four of Yuchi's friends came up from the south by this morning's train. He is enter-

taining them at a tea house, and you and I will join the party. You'll enjoy it, Jean. It's about the only interesting feature of this country, in my opinion. I don't know much about the tea houses of Sendai, but Yuchi tells me there is one which he calls 'The House of a Thousand Joys.' We are to dine *à la Japonaise*, and if you get half as much fun out of it as I did out of one at Tokio, you'll talk about it for the rest of your life. The party commences to-morrow afternoon at four. I shall come home early, and we'll go down in jinrikishas."

She grasped his hand impulsively, and her eyes danced as she said:

"Robert, you're always thinking of how you can please me."

"And you'll always please me," he replied gravely, "if you'll try to remember that when you're depressed, I'm depressed—when you're elated, my sky is full of sunshine."

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND JOYS

THE finishing touch to a simple, yet exquisite, toilet was a maple leaf loosely threaded in Jean's bronze hair; the dress was of plain white muslin, and made by herself during the voyage from England; a tartan sash clasped the waist. As she came down from her room, Robert caught her up, and with boyish enthusiasm kissed her on both cheeks, declaring that not until that moment had he realized how beautiful she was. And though she bade him "ha'e done wi' his havoring," her cheeks blushed with pride.

They drove in a double jinrikisha to the House of a Thousand Joys, and whirled up to the veranda in a cloud of dust. A line of geisha awaited them on the veranda, their gaudily colored kimonos suggesting a strip from a rainbow. Behind the line were Yuchi and his friends; the little man came down the steps and, with excessive politeness, assisted Jean to alight. Robert had leaped from the flimsy conveyance as soon as the shafts were lowered to the ground by the "boy," and, after slapping Yuchi heartily on the shoulders, ran lightly up the steps to grasp the hand of a tall, bronzed European who was standing among Yuchi's friends like a Gulliver among the Lilliputians.

"Morrow! Dick Morrow!" he cried delightedly.

"Who arranged this pleasant surprise?" He swung round, Morrow's hand still grasped in his, and hailed Jean, who was returning the welcomes of the geisha in their own language, and enjoying her slips as much as was Yuchi. "Jean, my dear, come here at once and let me introduce you to the whitest man in the East."

She went forward slowly, falteringly. Somehow a shadow had fallen on the House of a Thousand Joys. She felt nervous, afraid, and there was deep reproach in the glance she gave her brother.

"Dick Morrow, dear"—he was too excited to read aright the look in her eyes—"the Reverend Richard Morrow, to give him his full handle, but 'Dick' suits him better than all the titles even the Mikado could heap upon him."

A geisha came sliding out of the house, and with a smile and a word of Japanese, Morrow handed her his topee, then moved toward Jean. She held out her hand; all the laughter had fled from her face. Robert brought the two together.

"My sister Jean, Dick. You remember how I used to rave about her?"

Jean raised her eyes, to meet a pair as blue as her own.

"Dick's a missionary, dear," Robert explained, "but different from all the missionaries you ever heard of."

To Jean, Richard Morrow was more like a guardsman than the missionary of her conception; he was taller even than Robert, and there was greater breadth of shoulder; the hair was fair and thin, the high temples fully exposed.

"Your brother and I are old friends," he said, as he

pressed her hand, "and although this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you, I can assure you that you are no stranger. Robert and I shared a bungalow in Tskijui for a time, and generally the evening was spent in talking of the old people and—you."

"That'll do, Dick," came from Robert. "Jean knows enough, without telling her more. . . . Jean, you have a natural taste for stories of adventure—get Dick to yarn about his China days: pirates, Boxers, and all that kind of thing."

Richard Morrow shook his head deprecatingly.

"Miss MacWhinnie doesn't want to hear those stories," he said smilingly; "they're for men—men who are tired of listening to the cicada screaming and the—the samisen. You have heard the samisen, Miss MacWhinnie?"

Jean nodded dolefully.

"I've been listening to it for twelve weary years," he told her, "and I've given up hope of convincing these dear people that it isn't musical. . . . And how long have you been in the country?"

"Only a month or so," said Jean, with another side-long glance at Robert.

"And you've come out for a holiday and been disappointed."

"Why should I be disappointed?" she asked, in the far-away tone of one who had nothing else to say.

"Everyone professes to be disappointed in the country, but there is a charm about it quite distinct from the flowery pictures painted by some of the Westerners. It isn't a land of toy people, and they're not so

clever that the wonder is they haven't conquered the world and all that sort of thing. Those Western word painters have a great deal to answer for."

"I've found it very interesting thus far," Jean ventured.

"Of course you have; and there's much more to interest you. Personally, I should like to have another glimpse of the old country, but——" He held up his hand in a gesture of despair.

"Can't you afford it?" she asked seriously. "It's an awful lot of money— isn't it?"

He smiled at her ingenuousness, but immediately confessed that he wasn't able to charter a steamship, and never would be, so long as he remained a missionary.

"If I told you that I couldn't leave the country because I was so much in love with my work, the chances are that you'd dub me a hypocrite. And I hate hypocrisy."

She averted her face. Robert had returned to Yuchi, and was being introduced to the other guests—officials who had come up from Tokio.

"Shall we go inside?" Morrow inquired of her, offering an arm.

She held back; she was anticipating a thousand questions.

"I think Robert would like me to speak to his friends," she said shyly.

"Oh! they'll introduce themselves," he assured her. "This banquet will last longer than you think."

She gave a final glance in Robert's direction. Then:
"Are you staying in Sendai?"

"I wish I were"—and his eyes, in meeting hers, emphasized the wish.

"You're going away—to-morrow?"

Her face was so grave and her voice so full of anxiety that he hardly knew what response to make.

"There's a little trouble in the north," he said, at last. "I was on my way there when I ran across Yuchi in Tokio. Yuchi helped me out of a difficulty eight years ago, and we've been very good friends since. I was young and green in those days, and went the wrong way to work to soothe an angry village."

She sighed, and looked at him whimsically.

"Are you a monkey-wrench man, then?"

He shook his head in wonder.

"It was a while ago that we met a man here; he told me that the best way to handle a native was with a monkey-wrench."

He laughed at the story of MacConnachie, the little engineer, and confessed that there were times when a monkey-wrench would be much more useful than a hymn-book.

"Then why do missionaries come here?" she asked quietly, secretly glad of the turn of the conversation.

"I could tell you why I came," he said, with a half sigh, "but I don't suppose it would interest you. I cannot tell why the majority come."

"To convert the people, I suppose," suggested Jean. He took a deep breath.

"Then, I'm a failure," he said. "I never seek to convert them——"

"Then you're not earning your wages."

"No. And they haven't been paid for a long while.

. . . I teach them, or try to teach them, to respect the religion of the foreigner."

"And you're going away to-morrow?"—dreamily.

"There's an outbreak or something up there."

"Fever?"

"Maybe. . . . Probably too much saké."

"And you'll be there a long while?"

"Not very long. Probably six months."

She smiled at the gestures of a geisha on the veranda a few yards from where they were standing.

"I'm going to enjoy this banquet," she said, in a bright voice.

Robert came up with the other guests and introduced them, and while they were bowing and hissing around her, Jean heard her brother inviting Richard Morrow to stay with him at least a few days before going up country.

With a quickening of the breath she waited for Morrow's reply, dreading an acceptance. Yuchi had been at pains to describe the origin of the tea house, as the result of a casual remark by her, but disinterestedness was betrayed by the wandering eyes, so he began it all over again, believing that she had not heard. She nodded listlessly, her head slightly turned toward her brother.

". . . and this Daimio had a beautiful daughter, who played all day by the banks of the Yedo. . . ." Yuchi paused to take breath.

"My dear Robert," Morrow was saying, "I must press on; even this delay is unfair to the poor beggar awaiting me, but when Yuchi told me that you were here I couldn't resist the . . ."

“. . . and one day there came up the river in a golden sampan . . .”

“Very well. I’ll stay over to-morrow night, and we can make our plans for the future.”

There was a lull. Jean’s face was pathetically doleful. Morrow’s next words set her heart a-beating: “You haven’t said a word about the subject that was so dear to your soul a year ago—your prospective marriage?”

Robert’s voice dropped to a whisper.

Richard Morrow exclaimed: “My dear old fellow!” and his voice teemed with pity.

Jean turned to Yuchi.

“Shall we go in, Mr. Yuchi?” she said. “I’m dying to see the inside of the house.”

Richard Morrow broke away from Robert, and came over to Jean. She accepted the proffered arm, and, their shoes having been removed, in accordance with custom, and soft slippers fitted in their place, the party passed into the tea house. Within ten minutes, Jean was completely at ease in her mind. Yuchi, as the host, was in the middle of the arc which the guests formed in the banqueting room. Jean sat on his left; then came Richard Morrow and two of Yuchi’s compatriots; Robert was on the right of the host. A band of daintily clad musumes brought in the inevitable tea, each guest having a personal attendant; Morrow insisted on Jean sipping from his cup, assuring her that it was a custom of the country, and confessing to a faulty knowledge the moment after.

“And yet I’ve been to scores of these banquets. They grow on one.”

Jean glanced down at the second course, which had been placed on the mat at her side.

"Hi-okwashi," whispered Morrow, "and much nicer than oatmeal cakes."

"Do you value Robert's good opinion?" Jean asked, with feigned seriousness.

"I think I value yours more," he replied; and he never could tell why, from that moment, she gave no lead to the conversation.

He must have gathered from her reticence that his remark was liable to be misconstrued; but he was not the kind of man to apologize for a liberty which he had never intended to take. Nor was he affronted by her sudden coldness; instead, like the big-hearted, open-minded fellow that he was, he tried to call back the smiles by jest and story. In a little while he knew that he had won, for Jean was hanging on his words like a child in an Eastern courtyard listening to some story-teller of the desert. He had led an adventurous life from his early boyhood, and although behind the seeming lightness of his mood there was a faint note of pathos, of regret, he lifted her out of herself, and invested the moment with a romance of which she had never before dreamed. His stories were told in simple language, not so modestly that he was likely to arouse her admiration in himself, but with a directness that made strong appeal to her simple mind. There were tales of China, of days when missionaries were never certain which weapon would be most effective against the superstitious; tales of gun-running before he became a missionary; of expeditions in Formosa, when the head-hunters were enjoying their day of un-

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interrupted carnage. He had planted tea in Ceylon, and hunted elephants in Southern India. He seemed to have covered the whole world in his travels; he was familiar with every port; he knew the line to which a steamer belonged by a single glance at her flags or funnels; he could speak a dozen tribal languages, and was as well versed in medicine as many a practitioner at home. The one thing he didn't know, or rather didn't try to explain, when with natural inquisitiveness she interjected a question, was why he became a missionary.

It was a wonderful night for Jean, for this man with the broad, bronzed face and eyes so blue and honest that the mind could almost be read through them, taught her the sublimest of gifts: how to forget. What had been might never have been. All the sobs and heartaches of the last few months might never have existed; she might never have known what it was to hide the light of day from her little room at home and pray that the darkness would give her courage to do that which she premeditated. He made of her in those few hours in the tea house—he made of her a girl, just as she was when she played the mother to Robert in the narrow, cobbled streets of Ballyhousie. He brought back laughter, though she had told herself that never again could she smile in earnest. He made her feel that the old world in the West had passed away in a whirl of cloud, and that a new earth had appeared in the Eastern hemisphere. He had told her that for twelve years his life had been lived exclusively among the natives of the interior; he told her, also, that they had been the happiest years of his life.

"Lonely? No, I've never been lonely," he said. "Loneliness is generally the result of selfishness. You'll always find something of interest in the smallest thing created, if by the exercise of a little imagination you will invest that smallest thing with the importance with which it was dignified in the beginning."

During the banquet, Robert came over to them, and the glow on her cheeks, the sparkle in her eyes, was a greater joy to him than any he could remember since they sailed from the Thames.

There was dancing and samisen playing, and a group of geisha gave an exhibition of posturing. A little singing girl paid court to Morrow in a dainty fantasy by one of the native poets, and Morrow delighted everyone by blending his rich baritone with the singing girl's voice in a duet.

It was nearly midnight when the banquet came to an end. Shawls of Indian silk were brought for "O Jean San." The veranda was strung with lighted lanterns, and the waiting jinrikisha in which she was to drive back to the bungalow was covered with blossoms, while a painted lantern hung from each shaft. Morrow assisted Jean into her carriage, and turned to call Robert to take his place by her side; but impulsively Jean moved her white skirt, and there was a look of invitation in her eyes. He climbed up beside her. Robert, coming down the steps at that moment, hailed a second vehicle, and promised the "boy" an extra yen if he won the race home.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SERMON ON THE VERANDA

THE run through the cool night air was a perfect antidote to the fatigue of the long hours in the tea house, and by the time the bungalow was reached Jean was as wide awake as when first she set out. All three were in high spirits, and to lessen the risks of the banquet Robert insisted on a Western supper. Jean herself prepared it, rather than arouse the sleeping servants; and if Robert had not been so preoccupied, he would have marked the admiring looks Richard Morrow gave Jean as she went to and fro in the preparing of that meal. And when, at last, they pushed back their chairs, Jean urged them to the veranda while she cleared away the things.

They were lying back in rattan chairs, burning tobacco with the luxuriousness of sybarites, when she rejoined them; and Richard Morrow was saying: "And now let's hear about your work."

She seated herself in a chair between them, after her brother had been assured that they were not keeping her up.

"Work?" said Robert, reaching out for the match that Jean seemed always to have ready. "It's going so smoothly, Dick, that I almost feel ashamed of the progress made. I like to feel that I've earned what

I'm paid. In another month or two we shall have linked up the two lines."

"And then?" asked Morrow, and his eyes sought Jean's.

"What should you think?" said Robert.

"You'll go back home, of course. That's what they all do when they've made enough."

"But I shall never have made enough," said Robert.

"Avarice is surely the last of your vices," Morrow said.

"I'm not sure that it is," said Robert. "In fact, during the last month or two I have been thinking perhaps a little too much about the power of wealth. It's so easy to make the gaining of money the first ambition in life."

"And that's not like you. What does your sister say?"

"Whatever Robert says is right," said Jean.

"I'm on a big thing out here, Dick." And Robert gave his friend a searching look, as though he were calculating his loyalty.

"You've been doing big things ever since you came first to the country," said Morrow. "What's the latest plan?"

"Would you like to come into it?"

Jean blew out the match after lighting Robert's pipe.

"Would you go into anything yourself, Robert," she asked, "if you didn't know anything at all about it?"

"I've made a big discovery," said Robert to Morrow, "and when I'm through with this work I'm going

down to see them at Tokio, with the object of getting a concession. It's coal. Yuchi is in it. It was he who put me up to it. Yuchi has a good head on his shoulders."

"They all have good heads, these Japanese," said Morrow, not in the least enthusiastic.

"I can trust Yuchi. He's the most loyal man that I've had under me. He has influence, as I have, and the concession is as good as granted. Why don't you come in, Dick? You're pessimistic about it?"

"About the coal? Oh, no! I shouldn't be surprised to learn that there is more coal in this country than in your own, although there would be much greater chance of success if you searched for gold."

"You know something, Dick?"

Morrow was calmly recharging his pipe.

"Perhaps I do," he said; "but it never interested me sufficiently, so that I can't speak with the detail of a prospector."

Robert's eyes were blinking thoughtfully.

"It was only a jest, wasn't it—the gold, I mean? You don't mean to say that you've come across evidences of it?"

"My dear fellow," said Morrow, "don't look at me like a company promoter! It isn't like you. It isn't like the Robert MacWhinnie I knew two years ago. What if I said yes?"

"I should doubt it," said Robert.

"And that's not like you, either. But if it will turn your mind from this coal business, I will tell you that during the last twelve years I have come across gold-bearing quartz, silver ore, and tin."

"Dick, you've had too much saké."

"I never touch it," said Morrow.

"And you mean to say that you've never tried to exploit these discoveries?"

"Why should I? It isn't my profession."

"But, think of it, man! I could get together a hundred capitalists to-morrow, if I could give them proof of the existence of gold-bearing quartz!"

"I dare say I could interest a thousand; but I don't wish to."

"I didn't know you were so wealthy as all that," said Robert, with a sigh.

"I'm so wealthy," said Morrow, "that, as your dear sister suggested at the banquet, I couldn't afford to go home if I wished to. . . . Robert, old fellow"—he leaned over and tapped Robert's chair with the bowl of his pipe—"don't let avarice get into your soul. Once it gets in, you'll never get it out, and it can eat into a good heart with the deadly effect of a canker-worm eating into an apple. You're doing splendid work out here. Surely that ought to be enough for you. In a few years, if you progress at the same rate, you will be able to do what you used to say was the height of your ambition."

"I've forgotten it," said Robert sullenly.

"I can't believe it. There used to be a picture in your mind—you described it to me a thousand times. It was a huge signboard over the gates of an engineering yard on the banks of the Thames—'MacWhinnie Brothers.' "

Robert shrugged his shoulders, as though he didn't care to pursue those lines.

"My dear Morrow, you're allowing your professional spirit to override sound judgment."

"No, I never do that."

"You have it in your mind that Yuchi has taken advantage of me—of my greenness."

"Knowing Yuchi as I do," said Morrow, "I'm certain that he wouldn't do anything of the kind. But, tell me—do you think these people over here are so childish that they would grant you the concessions you sought if they had the slightest inkling of what was behind your application?"

"Now, you're preaching," said Robert. "You don't suppose for one minute that I should go to them and inform them that here was coal easily to be worked, and that I wanted a concession for a nominal sum? Naturally they wouldn't grant it."

"All right, Robert," said Morrow lightly. "Don't let me interfere with your plans. I told you in the first place that I wasn't interested, personally. Only I think it would hurt if the old Robert MacWhinnie did anything that wasn't strictly honorable."

Robert straightened himself in his chair.

"Honorable! My dear Dick, you're the last person in the world I would accuse of narrow-mindedness; but, really, it's too absurd."

"No, I don't think it is. Wait till you come to think it out calmly. These people have treated you very well. You used to say that yourself. And it's a bankrupt country. They need all the money they can get hold of for the educating of their people. During the last few years there have been many instances of

the cunning of the Westerner outwitting a primitive people."

"But, if they should grant me this concession, you're not going to suggest that there is anything dishonorable in the working of a coal mine? It's ridiculous!"

"To tell you the truth," said Morrow, "I'm trying to save you from your own impulsiveness. Here, in this country, you have a chance to realize all the ambitions that were yours two years ago. And you can realize them honorably. I want to see you do that. I hope I may live to see the day when these people will recognize you as you deserve to be recognized. Why, I doubt that any man has earned so much respect as you have during the last three years. Down in Tokio, the name of Robert MacWhinnie is synonymous with honor. The natives speak of you—in Osaka, Nagasaki, Kobe—as the one man they have met to whom honor appears to be as dear as life itself. You might go through a thousand battles, winning victory after victory, without gaining for yourself so great a tribute. . . . And, having preached so much, I'll enjoy another pipe, if I may, and then I'll turn in. Your sister isn't interested in our conversation. She's tired—she must be—and I should be a very ungrateful guest if I kept you up any longer."

Jean leaned over the back of Robert's chair and kissed him on the cheek.

"Good night," she said; and to Richard Morrow she held out her hand.

When she was gone, Robert leaned toward his friend's chair and whispered very earnestly:

"I'm keen on this coal business, Dick, and it isn't

avarice that has hold of me. Between you and me, the striving to accumulate money helps to deaden a lot of pain in one's life."

Morrow maintained a sympathetic silence for a minute.

"Bearing in mind what you told me at the banquet, Robert," he said presently, "I can almost understand your feelings; but, believe me, great wealth is seldom a solatium. Very often it makes grief greater than it really is, because it serves to excite the imagination. It urges you to think of what might have been, and to dwell too long on the supposed ironies of life. There! That is the last word from me on the subject. Now don't continue the argument, because this is the first night of thorough enjoyment that I've had for nearly twelve years. I want to sit here, smoking quietly, for half an hour, before I curl up on my rice-mat. By this time to-morrow night I shall be plugging northward, with the prospect of being buried for six or seven months. Maybe you will have moved from Sendai by that time."

"It's almost certain," said Robert, "but you'll always be able to trace me by applying to headquarters. When did you say you were coming back?"

"Seven months, at the latest."

Robert blew out a cloud of smoke. His eyes were nearly closed.

"Seven months," he echoed. "Ah, yes! That's all right, Dick, and we'll have a great night when you come back. . . . Come along, and I'll show you your room."

Robert left his pipe on the table near his chair, and Dick drew his attention to it.

"I shall have another smoke," said Robert. "There are two or three specifications to work out for Yuchi. We hope to get through with the bridge across the river before the next big tides."

"You'll get through with it, Robert," said Dick encouragingly, "if you show anything like the old spirit."

"Maybe," said Robert, "but these natives are not so submissive as they were three years ago. They're beginning to understand that a man is worthy of his hire. They used to work for thirty sen a day, these laborers; but you don't get them to do it nowadays."

"That's the finest tribute that has ever been paid to my work," said Dick.

"Oh, it's not religion that's doing it!" said Robert, always ready for an argument.

"Perhaps not," said Dick. "You see, we haven't come to that stage yet. We're teaching them first to appreciate the fact that they are men. By the time you get that coal concession, Robert—I must have another last word!—you'll find that your thirty sen laborer will ask for his three yen a day, and a day of eight hours." And with a light laugh Richard Morrow went to his room.

Robert returned to the veranda. It was a perfect night, with the faintest puff of breeze to stir the air.

He left the veranda, and went down into the compound, where he sat by the side of Jean's gold-fish pond. The moon, looking down from straight over-

head, painted many faces on the placid water. He saw only one.

Richard Morrow was right. Honor represented everything to Robert MacWhinnie. And Robert was right. Only in work—hard, unsparing work—could he find relief from the pain that was always there.

His pipe had gone out; he was staring at the water, his head moving slowly to the current of his thoughts, when someone in a purple kimono came softly down the veranda steps. He half turned as she neared him.

"All right, Jean," he said, in a tired voice. "I was just enjoying the peace of the moment. Couldn't you sleep?"

"Not until I had seen you alone, Robert."

"How now?" he exclaimed, rising and placing his hand on her shoulder.

"I want you to tell me," she said, in a trembling voice, "and I promise you that I'll never broach the subject again without your permission."

He frowned slightly, but said: "Yes; what is it?"

"I want you to tell me what you said to Mr. Morrow in the tea house when he asked you about—about your marriage?"

"I told him a lie," said Robert, "and if you don't go straight back to your room, I shall tell you one; and I don't want two to my discredit."

He said it laughingly, but Jean knew that he was not to be moved. She tried another way.

"Robert," she said, and her eyelids drooped, "don't you think that Richard Morrow is too good a man to be lied to?"

"He's too good a friend," said Robert, "not to understand if he should learn the truth."

"You've been lying to me, Robert, all along. I heard you say to Mr. Morrow—I hadn't gone to bed, and I couldn't help overhearing—I heard you say that the accumulating of wealth helped to deaden the pain in one's life. He didn't understand, but I did. Your heart's just full of pain."

"Anxiety, you mean, Jean. That coal has got hold of me, and especially his yarns about gold and silver. Morrow knows what he's talking about, and . . . Jean! there's a lizard under your feet! Get back to your room."

CHAPTER XV

UNDEFINED HOPES

THE next morning, Robert went down to superintend the work at the bridge, leaving Jean to entertain Dick until he should return in the late afternoon. Throughout the day, the two—Jean and Morrow—enjoyed themselves like two children wandering over the moors at home. Never for a moment was there the slightest embarrassment on either side—not even when he carried her in his arms across a patch of swamp. When they went down the slope to meet Robert on his return from the labors of the day, one would have thought that they had known each other from childhood.

It was a joyous evening that followed, with Richard Morrow playing the rôle of raconteur, and seemingly making it the height of his ambition to part Jean's lips in laughter. He left long before the native watchman stole round the grounds with his wooden click-clack. He left in anything save an atmosphere of misgiving, although they knew, as he did, of the dangers that lay before him. And when Jean and Robert were alone again—just when that feeling of loneliness that follows, inevitably, a parting, came creeping into the bungalow, when the shaded lights were beginning to burn low—Robert looked up from his book to see

Jean's eyes dim with tears, and tears that were not of sadness. With a half smile that he hoped would hide his own emotions, he dropped back into the accent of earlier days:

"He's an awf'y nice man, Jean."

"Ay, Robert," she said, and looked away.

"I'm glad you liked him."

"Could a body help liking him?"

"It doesna seem altogether right that he should be wasting his life out here."

"Wad ye call it wasting, Robert?"

"A straight man"—reflectively.

"Awf'y straight."

"And open, Jean."

"As your ain guid sel'."

"And yet, Jean—and yet there's something about Dick Morrow that I've never been able to understand."

"Why he should be here?"

"That's it."

"He's no hypocrite, Robert."

"I grant ye that. But it seems to me that he was never made for this work. Do you know what occurred to me when he was sitting on the veranda last night and speaking first with the carelessness of a boy and then with the solemnity of an old man? It occurred to me, Jean, that Dick Morrow was undergoing—shall I say it?—a kind of penance."

"Robert, man, how ye haver!"

"Maybe it's my imagination. . . . Wasted—that's what I call it. And yet I have heard that Dick Morrow can do more out in the wilds, among the most

primitive of these people—these villagers who haven't yet learned even of the evolution of their own country—I have heard that he can do more with these people than the authorities themselves."

"Does that surprise you, Robert?"

"I don't mean that he has so impressed them with his—with his faith—that he has awed them. I don't mean that at all. To tell you the truth, I don't believe Dick ever tries to set them a better example than his own. Do you quite follow me, Jean? What kind of an influence did he have upon you?"

She looked up suddenly.

"Why do you ask me that, Robert?"

And he returned her startled look.

"I mean, did you feel the personality of the man, the magnetism?"

"Ye were always generous to your friends, Robert."

"One couldn't be too generous to Richard Morrow. I assure you, Jean, that when he's near me, when he's in my company, and whether or not I'm speaking to him, I feel him. He seems to pick out all the goodness that is in a man—and all the badness. Ye mind how quick he was to take me up about that concession. I don't believe that he saw any wrong in it. There is no wrong in it. It's only business. But I fancy that he was looking ahead, looking past the time when the concession was mine, and thinking of all the disappointments that might come to me. He has a wonderful faculty—for looking far ahead. And the best of Dick Morrow, if you take him as a missionary, is that he never bores you with the demands of his calling.

No, Jean, there's something very human about Dick Morrow."

He paused, and returned the steady look she was giving him. She was very still; she didn't appear to be breathing. She was waiting.

"Jean," he said, without raising his voice above the quiet, musing tone with which he had opened the conversation, "I'm more than glad that you like Dick, although I cannot explain exactly why."

"No, Robert"—her fingers were playing fitfully with the while fringe of her blouse.

"A perfect ladies' man—and so gentle."

"Very gentle, Robert."

"And broad-minded—although he annoyed me by his preaching on the coal sermon. . . . What did you find to talk about to-day, while I was at the bridge?"

"A thousand and one things. I don't think he was feeling too brave about this new expedition."

"Oh! That's because you don't understand Dick yet. If he felt that he was really needed at the North Pole, he'd plug ahead, as he calls it."

"He'll be away a long while."

"Seven months—I was careful to ask him that."

"Why should you ask him that, Robert?" Her voice shook a little; he half turned in his chair, and saw how it was with her.

"Why?" he echoed. "Because I want to get ahead with the coal project before he returns."

"Ah!" . . .

"Fill my pipe, Jean—there's a good girl."

She filled the pipe from the tobacco jar and handed

it to him. He fancied that her fingers trembled as she held the flame of the match to the bowl.

"We used to talk a great deal about you, Jean—Dick and I." His eyes were following the rings of smoke to the ceiling. "I believe—believe that he was almost in love with you before he set eyes on you——"

"Robert!" Her face reflected the pain of the mind.

His eyes were still following the drifting smoke.

"It was one of the dearest wishes of my heart at the time." He stopped, abruptly, and looked across at her. "And there's no reason why you shouldn't——"

"Robert!" she pleaded.

"No reason whatever, Jean"—now he was leaning over the back of her chair. "He spoke to you before he went away? You can't deny it, Jean. I saw it in your eyes when you came down the hill to meet me this afternoon. He spoke to you, Jean?"

Slowly she raised her face and looked at him as he bent over the chair.

"Yes, Robert, he did," she said in a whisper. "I meant to tell you to-night about it. I gave him no answer."

Anything might have happened in the minute that followed. An ill-chosen word by him would have flung her back, a crushed, despairing woman. But he sprang from behind the chair, and in a second she was in his arms.

"Don't tell me any more," he said, laughingly, and yet there was a break in the laugh. "Not a word, Jean. I understand, and I tell you frankly that, if all the men in the world could have been arrayed before me, only to Dick Morrow would I have pointed as the

one man likely to make you happy. Jean, I have never felt so full of contentment as I do now. It seems as though the sky had suddenly opened to let the sun stream down untrammelled by a single wisp of cloud."

"Rob, man," she sobbed, and pressed her face against his breast, the while his arms tightened around her shoulders. "Rob, you don't know what you're saying."

"I do, Jean. I tell you again, there's no reason why you shouldn't make Dick Morrow as happy—as happy as I am to-night. And there's a man for you, who would lay down his very life to give the woman he loved one moment of pleasure. Dick—Dick is a knight, as big and fine as any knight of Elizabeth's time, and with a grander temperament. Oh! you lucky Jean!"

She struggled to free herself.

"Rob, Rob! For God's sake, listen!"

He shook her playfully by the shoulders.

"I shall listen to nothing. You're going to be happy, Jean, and if you allow one thought to interfere with your happiness I shall call you ungrateful. I'll—I'll send you back home. I will! And I'll go on building this old railway alone."

"Rob! You're forgetting——"

"I'm forgetting nothing. It's you who have to forget."

"What was it that I said to you, Robert, last night? He's too good a man to be lied to."

"And what did I say to you, Jean? He's too good

not to understand if he were told the truth. You've promised him, Jean?"

"Nothing, Robert."

"Ay, but was it a nothing that meant everything?"

"Robert, let me go to my room. My heart's just——"

"You shall go to your room, Jean, after you've looked me straight in the eyes and shown me the truth. Now, Jean?" And he held her from him, and compelled her to look up.

And before her head could droop to the bidding of her heart, he had pressed his hands on her cheeks and kissed her on the brow.

"Then, to bed with you, Jean, and no more tears, no more doubtings, no more looking for clouds when there's only the sun in the sky. Lie to him? No, we'll not lie to him. I'll talk to Dick Morrow. If Dick is as big-hearted and noble as he used to be, I know what his answer will be. There, Jean! Awa' wi' ye."

With a little cry of pain and joy commingled she flung her arms around his neck, crying: "Robert, man, ye bear burdens so lightly!"

"Well, Jean, aren't my shoulders broad enough?" And he stretched himself to his full height, then picked her up as though she were a child and carried her to the door. And when he heard the customary call, "Good-night," from her little room, he went back to the table in the dining-room, turned the shaded lamp very low, and said very softly and to himself:

"I could bear the burden even more lightly, Margaret, if only I knew that *you* understood."

CHAPTER XVI

GOD'S PLEASURE

THERE is nothing like work for keeping the mind free from morbid and depressing thoughts. With right good will Robert applied himself to his labors, and in the few weeks immediately following the departure of Richard Morrow, he succeeded in convincing Jean that his heart was at perfect peace. Night after night, in the silence of the bungalow on the hill, he gave himself up to a study of the potentialities that might have to be combated in the further work that lay before him, and when these tended to weary, he gave up an hour or two to some of the crude drawings that came by every mail from the little father at home, who was certain that a fortune was contained in each one. On these nights, Jean sat on the other side of the table, reading or writing, and there was always half an hour before retiring for the night when they found joy in recounting the incidents of their childhood. Seldom did he mention Dick Morrow, and then only to wonder how he was managing among the people to whom he had dedicated his life; he never broached the subject that was constantly in her mind, in spite of the smiling eyes she turned upon him.

And then trouble occurred among the natives en-

gaged on the railway. As Dick Morrow had prophesied, the laborer was beginning to realize that he was worthy of his hire; and at a time when every hour was of supreme value because of the approach of the high tides, they rebelled against the shortage of labor and the excessive hours they were asked to work. Yuchi brought the news; it was something so new and startling to him that he almost alarmed Robert with his forebodings. Jean was less susceptible; for some time she had closely identified herself with the bridge-building, and by organizing small nursing-camps among the women and children, and assisting in a hundred ways to make their life possible, had endeared herself to them. For three days the men held back from work; for Yuchi they expressed supreme contempt; for Robert they had but an expressive shrug of the shoulders. But Jean impressed them; they could not associate her with gain at their expense, and when the women added their pleas to hers, the work was resumed. It was a triumph for which Robert gave her the fullest credit, and, in a way, the influence which she had been able to exert strengthened in her certain hopes and ambitions which Richard Morrow had inspired.

At last, the work was completed. Robert went down to Tokio, leaving Jean in the bungalow with her servants for several days. When he returned, it was with news which he hoped would lessen the Shadow that both of them were dreading in secret.

"Jean, my bonnie girl," he cried, as he ran lightly up the veranda steps, "we're striking camp at once. [Three months' rest in Nagasaki, where I'm to report

on a new scheme. Don't ask me the nature of it; I don't know it myself yet. The orders are there, awaiting me. But it's a big thing, and if all the promises are fulfilled we shall have that signboard up on the banks of the Thames before we're many years older."

They went to Nagasaki, and it was there, a month later, that the Shadow came and passed, leaving in their care a girl-child from out of whose eyes Jean looked—and smiled.

And Robert, who had awaited this evidence of God's pleasure as one awaiting the silver and gold of dawn after the long night—awaited it in the stillness of the garden behind the bungalow—in the stillness of the Eastern night, when the imagination is attuned to the romance of the diamond-studded Vault, sighed, softly, "God be good to ye, Jean—my little sister," then as softly Petitioned.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BURDEN-BEARER

THEY stayed in Nagasaki only three months, and who shall attempt to describe those months and what they held for Robert MacWhinnie? They were going back to Kobe, thence to Tokio, where they were to meet officials, and (this news came through the capital, and reached them after many weeks) Richard Morrow!

"There's always something to be done—somewhere," he had written in his scrawling hand, "and as I shall have only a week in Tokio I must see as much of you and Jean as possible. They tell me that the Sendai task is finished. Don't develop swelled head, and race back to England with your belt well-lined; there may come an earthquake to crumble everything that you've done, and it may be necessary to start it all over again. Blame the heat and the trying work in this swamp of a place for the strain of pessimism. We've had a rough time of it here, and little Murgatroyd, the only other white in the district, went under at the end of the first month. And here am I, as strong and healthy as ever—vulgarly healthy, in fact, and I'm coming down to Tokio to receive all the reward. Pretty rough on poor Murgatroyd! I'm arranging for the organization of a band of white work-

ers to go to—where should you think?—Sendai, or rather, within five miles of the town. The rice harvest has failed—floods at the wrong time of the year—and what with starvation conditions, and lack of spirit, the natives are down with some kind of disease. The Missionary Society is doing its best, but we want twenty or thirty men and women who are not afraid of real hard work to which there is not nearly so much profit as bridge-building.”

Before leaving Nagasaki, Robert and Jean fought out the greatest issue between them. He compelled her to sit down, and urged her to keep silence while he “laid down the law,” as he put it; he, himself, paced to and fro while he was speaking.

“Jean,” he said, “you have shown wonderful courage during the months you have been out here—courage I never thought a woman was capable of. And now, you are to be tested even more severely. I promised you that”—his voice wavered slightly—“that I would speak to Dick Morrow. I will—when the right time comes. Dick is too good to be lied to—even as you said. Well, I’ll test Dick’s goodness—again, when the right time comes. But until then”—he came up to her and folded his arms around her neck—“until then, my bonnie sister, the child is mine—mine! Don’t speak” (she had clutched at his hands). “It’s not the idea of a moment; it’s been in my head for months, and I’ve wrestled with it from every point of view. Try to be brave, Jean. I know that your heart is nigh to bursting; I know what you are just dying to cry out. But keep quiet till I’m through with it. God never meant you to suffer for what has happened; there’s

work for you in this world—somewhere. And you'll do it. Once, you said to me that I had been lying all along—that I had been pretending to be happy. Whatever truth there was in it then, I swear to you that never in my life was I so happy as I am now. It's just as though a mission I had set my heart on was nearing its completion. The child is mine—for the time being. You may protest, plead, or do anything you please, but did you ever know me to be turned from anything on which I had set my heart? There's something else. If it's in your mind that you can turn me from this purpose, I'll show you something that ought to convince you of the impossibility. It's too late. Read that."

From a wallet he took a newspaper cutting, and handed it to her.

"That was mailed to the home papers the night after the little one came to—to fill my life."

She read it aloud, while he remained with his arms around her neck. It was an obituary notice.

"DOLORES, the wife of Robert MacWhinnie, at Nagasaki, September—childbirth."

"That's a part of the lie I told Dick Morrow," he said in a whisper; "he believed that she was at Nagasaki while you and I were at Sendai. . . . It's not easy to lie, Jean."

She was ready to fight, but he had anticipated every mood.

"It's not the idea of a moment," he repeated. "It came to me that night when we sat together in—in

dear old 'Charity Corner.' And I'm going on with it—for your dear sake, for Dick's sake, for my own sake."

Jean held her peace, but not through selfishness.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TEST—AND A DISAPPOINTMENT

IT was the same old Richard Morrow that greeted them when they reached the capital. A little thinner, perhaps, and with tiny white channels running from the corners of the eyes—Jean could visualize him peering through the heat-waves of the interior—but the same Dick in spirits. He was full of enthusiasm for his new project, and as eager to get back to work as a natural fighter to the firing line. He had been in the city only a few hours when they arrived, but he had struggled through an amazing amount of work. He had seen everybody who was anybody, he said, and scores who were nobodies; and the greatest triumph to his credit as the result of the morning's work was that Lady Chiseldon, the widow of an ex-consul, had volunteered to take charge of any nursing mission that should be formed.

The greeting between the two men was what might have been expected of them. Morrow's first words were of condolence, but it required no warning from Robert to show him that the right way to sympathize is to point to the sun, not to turn one's back upon it. Jean didn't overhear the words that passed between them when first they met in the vestibule of the hotel in Tokio, and when she joined them they were both

laughing and jesting as though the whole world were nothing but a playground.

That afternoon, Jean went with Dick Morrow to the house of Lady Chiseldon, Robert being summoned to the residence of the minister for railways. The three dined together in the hotel at night, and Jean left them immediately after dinner.

"She is like me," said Robert, with a light laugh; "she must always be doing something. We have been here only a day, and yet she is as anxious as I am to be up and doing."

"I was afraid that I should get back too late," said Dick, flicking the ash from his cigar and keeping his eyes down.

"I don't follow you," said Robert.

"The last few months have been very successful, haven't they?"

"Very," Robert admitted. "More successful than ever I imagined."

"Ah!" Dick sighed, "I had visions of your sailing before I had time to get across the country—sailing with your belt full."

"It will be many a long year before I leave this country," said Robert, "and when I go, it will not be like a thief in the night. Did you ever think of returning?"

"Why should I?" Dick asked. "What is there for me in England?"

"I should think that there's many a niche that you could fill admirably."

"I don't know the right end of a hammer, and I

should be a hopeless failure in any business you could think of."

"We'll talk about that some day," said Robert quietly. "The thing is, what are you going to do now? What's this new project of yours? Where are you going? And how long are you going to be away? And aren't you tired of shuffling through swamps without hope of any higher reward than a pile of stones with a rude cross thrust in the middle when you're gone?"

"Success," said Dick with a smile, "has a deplorable tendency to develop gloominess in a man."

"I'm not gloomy," said Robert, with a smile of protest; "I have no reason to be. But I'm getting more practical every day, Dick. I believe that I'm beginning to set a right value on my brains."

"Money-grubber!"

"Rubbish. I don't want money so much as I want power. I assure you, Dick, I have scores of ideas, each one of which is full of possibilities. When I get back to the old country—if I should go back—I'm going to exploit those ideas, and with the experience I have gained I shall be able to teach some of the old fogeys at home that old-fashioned methods cannot hope to live when the new come thrusting in. Come up to my room, and we'll talk it over."

But even after they were comfortably settled in the private room, no more was said about Robert's plans for the future. Dick was the first to speak.

"There are twenty of us going out on this trip," he said, "and it's going to be a real adventure. I wish

you could forget your old work, Robert, and come with us."

"To Sendai?"

"As I told you, it is about five miles out. There are four or five villages all lumped together. And we want money badly for the organizing of the expedition."

"How much?"

"Five thousand yen at the very least."

"What's the Government doing?"

"That's in addition to what the Government has done already."

"Do you expect to get it in a week?"

"If the country wasn't in such a bankrupt condition, I should have no difficulty in raising it in two days."

"Why should you interest yourself in these beggars? Why do you give up your life to the natives, who probably don't appreciate it? I've never argued with you on this point, Dick, but I think you know what my feelings are. My boy, you ought to live on the banks of the Thames for a year or so; then you'd understand the meaning of poverty and want. One of these days, you'll get back to England, and you'll realize that there's enough work there not only for you, but for every missionary that ever went out into the colonies."

"Two years ago," said Dick, with mock reproach, "Robert MacWhinnie would have stumped through the foreign quarters of half a dozen countries with me in order to raise five thousand yen for such a project as we're embarking on now. Money's spoiling you, Robert."

"Not in the slightest," Robert retorted. "I heard this morning that you needed that five thousand yen. You're staying with the same people at Tskijui, aren't you? You'll find a cheque for five thousand there when you get back."

Dick Morrow didn't give way to an outburst of gratitude. He knew his man. All that he said was: "Five thousand won't delay the erection of that sign-board a single day, Robert." Then he lit a fresh cigar, and puffed slowly the while his big blue eyes were narrowly scrutinizing Robert's face.

"Has Jean said anything to you?" he inquired presently.

Robert gave him a rapid glance.

"What about?" he asked, without pretending to be more than ordinarily interested.

"She went with me this afternoon to see Lady Chiseldon, who is to take charge of the nurses. Her ladyship made a great fuss of Jean."

Robert simply nodded, as though it were only what one might expect.

"And she asked Jean what I didn't dare ask."

Robert took the cigar from between his lips and waited expectantly. Dick rose from his chair, and said, with some warmth:

"Robert, old fellow, don't get it into your head that I've been trying to influence your sister. I haven't, because I know the risks."

"You want her to go out with this party?"

Dick nodded.

"Have you spoken to her?"

"I didn't say a word. Lady Chiseldon did all the

talking. And Jean—she told me that ever since I was with you in Sendai it had been a big hope in her heart. Not only is she willing, she's anxious to go. And I'll be frank with you, Robert. If she were there, it would make a great deal of difference to—to me. I want to talk to you about that."

Robert took a turn around the room. When he came to a halt his back was turned to Dick.

"I'm ready to listen to anything you have to say, Dick," he said, and his voice was hardly audible.

"If I told you that the last few months would have broken me entirely if it hadn't been for her—for memories of her—what would you say?"

"Jean is my sister, Dick, and you're one of the best friends I ever had in my life. Why don't you speak plainly?"

"There's only one reason why I hesitate," said Dick, dropping his voice; "is it fair to talk of such things when at this moment you yourself are suffering——?"

"I think I asked you to say no more about that."

"All right, Robert. I understand. Then let me go on. Am I worthy of your sister?"

"I know of none worthier."

"Have you guessed—have you seen—that I love Jean?"

"My mind has been too full of other things. Besides, I can never think of Jean as being other than a girl. We have been close friends from childhood, and I believe that if she went away from me now, it would be like losing. . . . But have you spoken to Jean herself?"

"Yes and no," said Dick. "I wanted your permission."

"And supposing she said yes, what would be your intentions?"

"This work at Sendai must be finished first."

Robert remained silent for a while. This man near him was the last in the world that he would wrong by so much as a word, but he had to fight for Jean as hard as he would fight for the honor of Richard Morrow.

"Look here, Dick," he said, with sudden warmth, "you and I will come to a bargain over this matter, and we won't consult Jean at all. If it is her wish, she shall go to Sendai, and you shall promise me that, if personally or by influence I can do anything for the proper equipment of the expedition—in addition to what has been done—you will let me know."

"I will," said Dick, with enthusiasm.

"And you will not say anything to Jean about—well, you know what—until you're through with this?"

"I promise. She will be in Lady Chiseldon's charge. And you, Robert?"

"I shall be here for a long while yet. When you come back we can talk this matter over again."

"And you're satisfied, Robert? I'm a penniless beggar with nothing but my work before me, but I know that I could do big things out here if I had the love and sympathy of a woman like Jean."

Robert grasped the extended hand.

"Money could make no difference to Dick Morrow," he said. "You'd always be the same."

He handed him a box of cigars.

"I was going to write to you last month," he said, slowly, as he regained his chair, "but, of course, I had no idea where you were, or how to get a letter through."

"Nothing to do with coal, I hope?"—with a whimsical smile.

"Nothing," said Robert. "It was a letter that came to me from a man who needed better advice than I could give him."

"And you thought my poor advice would be of use?"

"I was certain of it at the time, because of your profession; and you're a very broad-minded man, Dick. I think you know enough of the world to be able to give what I might call a mature judgment."

"Was he in trouble?"

"Yes, very serious trouble. This was the case: He was in love with a woman, and at the last moment she made a confession to him. . . . You've dropped the ash on your knee. . . . Don't give me your answer in a hurry, Dick, because I don't want to send this man a hastily considered judgment, because I know he'll take it to heart. I don't think I would have asked anyone but you. This woman made a confession. There was a child. Are you listening, Dick?"

"Intently."

"The other man was dead. Now, what would be your attitude in such a case?"

There was no spontaneous outburst of generosity as Robert expected. Dick lay back in his chair and smoked hard for a few minutes before replying.

"You mean to ask me if the existence of the child would make any difference in my affection for the woman? No, Robert, it wouldn't—not if I loved the woman deeply; but it is a more abstruse problem than you yourself seem to think it."

"How, abstruse?" And Robert's brows were overshadowed.

"You and I could settle it in a second," said Dick. "Neither you nor I would allow a thing like that to interfere. But there's the world to consider."

"Hang the world! . . . I beg your pardon, Dick. But I always thought you were so broad-minded."

"I hope I am," said Dick. "Surely that point doesn't arise."

"Then, why should you consider the world? Why should you trouble your head about what the world might think?"

"Perhaps," said Dick, "it's because I haven't had much experience; or, again, it may be that I have had too much. Still, there's no reason why you and I shouldn't give this young man the best of our advice."

"I'm writing by the next mail. I want your advice."

"If he loves this woman, and she loves him, and if her love for him is so great that she is willing to make a sacrifice, I should say the best thing to do would be to let the child go away, to be placed in the care of someone whom they both of them could trust. They might watch over the child with almost as much care as if it were under their own roof. That's all I can say."

"I had almost decided to send him such a reply," said Robert quietly.

CHAPTER XIX

SANCTUARY

IN the north, so it is said, they grow men; in the south they grow trees. Mr. John Drender, head of the firm of Drender, Masters and Company, would rather have sacrificed his Northumbrian burr—strong as ever, even after twenty or thirty years of Thames-side toil—than have confessed to injured pride when Robert MacWhinnie offered him the greatest slight the human heart can receive. Margaret was as proud as her father; by no sign did she convey to him how deep was her wound, but he understood, and wisely held his peace. The name, MacWhinnie, dropped out of their conversations after the day when Robert and his sister sailed for the Far East; when she received Robert's letter from Colombo, Margaret was tempted to take the grizzled old iron-master into her confidence, but in the end she let well alone, fearing to betray her innermost feelings by telling him of a hope that might not be realized. Masked by rugged lines and that beloved burr, John Drender hid from her the pain in his own heart. Even when he came upon the obituary notice in the *Times*: "Dolores, the wife of Robert MacWhinnie . . ." he merely glanced at it a second time and idly turned over the page. He said nothing about it to Margaret

that night; but he found a copy of another newspaper in the house with a cut from its obituary column, and though she laughed and sang that night as never before, he could feel the sobs that were tearing her.

Six weeks after the conversation between Robert and his friend Dick Morrow in the hotel at Tokio, the half-yearly meeting of Drender, Masters and Company was held. The old ironmaster went to Jarrow-side that night with beetling brows, and lips tightly compressed. And yet the evening newspapers were able to inform the readers of the financial news that the half-yearly report of Drender, Masters and Company was a strong answer to those who were ever bewailing the decaying industries of the country.

Margaret was in the garden when her father came through the gateway. She threaded the stem of a flower into the lapel of his coat and slipped an arm through his.

"We'll have dinner first, father," she whispered coaxingly, "and then you shall tell me all about it."

"You've an observant eye, Margaret."

"You frown so terribly. If a contract had been lost you couldn't show your disappointment more plainly."

"It's not a contract lost, it's a contract offered——" He stopped, as though ashamed of his ill-temper. Not for the first time, he saw a film as of sadness creeping over her dark eyes. She seemed always to be nerving herself for a further blow. He drove the angry light from his own, tenderly patted the white hand that was resting on his arm, and playfully hurried her toward the house.

"Dinner, Margaret, my little housekeeper, and then we'll have a crack. By the lord Harry! but the Tyne-side'll have something to sharpen their teeth on to-morrow, when they read the report of Drender and Masters! Up ten thousand on the corresponding half-year. What do you think of that?"

"Splendid! Splendid!"

"Ay, and friend Masters is strutting about like a dawg with a tin tail. Talks about taking his bit wife to Mentone for a holiday, as if the poor body isn't just wearying for a sight of Durham. Masters hasn't taken a holiday for ten years."

"I know someone else who hasn't been away from the Thames for fifteen years," she put in slyly.

"Hoots, hinny," he chided, "isn't every day a holiday at Jarrowside? Would you have me roaming about the country like a commercial traveler?"

"You'll never be different, father," she said, laughing, and as they reached the hall she began to remove the knitted scarf and the "chimney-pot" hat. His newspapers of the day, which always he brought back from the office, were thrown on the hall stand. She gave him ten minutes to prepare for dinner. . . .

"Coffee—and a pipe—and you, my lass."

He dragged the heavy divan chair toward the fire; she sat at his feet and charged the massive bowl with the strongest-flavored tobacco the south could provide.

"Now for the trouble, father." She tapped his knee with the pipe.

He shook his gray head deprecatingly.

"Hoots, hinny, it's nothing at all. The dinner's done me good."

"You'll get hungry again"—insinuatingly.

"What a body you are, Margaret. Nothing else'll satisfy you, I suppose?"

"Nothing. If you keep a trouble to yourself you're ill for days."

"It's about MacWhinnie—Robert MacWhinnie."

"Oh!" She turned her head quickly, and stared at the firebars.

"Do you want me to go on?" he asked, sympathetically.

"Why shouldn't you?"

He stooped and brushed her hair with his rough-grained hand.

"Ay, why shouldn't I, my lass?" he said softly. "His name came up at the meeting to-day. He had written to the firm—'his old firm,' as he had the impudence to call it."

"Father! What are you saying?" She had swung round; her cheeks aflame.

John Drender nodded reassuringly.

"It was the tone of his letter that nettled me," he told her. "He was in a position to 'confer' a contract on Drender and Masters—to confer it in the name of the Government he represented."

She had turned back to the fire.

"Why should you take umbrage at that?" she asked in a whisper, and it was well that he could not see the quivering of her lips.

"There was a smack about the letter that I didn't like." He grabbed at the match-box on the smoking-

table near him, and viciously struck a match against the side of the pipe-bowl.

"You would find in the letter just what your mind was anxious to find—you'd probably find more than was written there, or intended to be written." She spoke half to herself—eager to defend him even now.

"It was patronizing. Masters saw it before I did."

"Mr. Masters doesn't know Robert MacWhinnie."

"He knows enough of the family, anyway, Margaret—enough to last him for the rest of his life. That fool, Thomas——"

"You told me that he left the works some time ago."

"So he did, but he was safer inside than out. We paid six claims for compensation last week—minor injuries that would have been laughed at by the men themselves if he hadn't put the devil into their minds."

She made no reply to that, but continued to stare at the firebars, as though in the dull embers she were visualizing the scene.

"Margaret"—he ran the side of his forefinger across the gray mustache—"I'm sorry I said that about young Robert a minute ago. I'm sorry for the lad. Somehow—somehow I fancy he'd have had a bigger chance if he'd been the fool instead of the brainy one of the family. I thought like that the other day when I saw his two younger brothers sauntering past the yard and trying to put a sneer on as the men went out for their dinner hour. And it was as much as I could do to keep myself from going up to them and lacing them for a couple of young vagabonds."

"What business was it of yours, Mr. John Drender?"

"True, true, Margaret, but, you see, I kind of brought up young Robert—he said as much in his letter. . . . Ay, ay, Robert MacWhinnie, I'll take back a deal of what I said just now. . . . They're living on him, Margaret—that's my opinion, but I suppose he knows what he's about. . . . Margaret, you knew that he had married?"

"Yes," she answered quickly, and though she turned a brave face upward, he could not fail to mark the gathering of the tears. "I wrote to him."

"You wrote to him?"

"A letter of condolence."

His pipe had gone out again. He struck another match, and just before applying the flame to the tobacco—

"So did I," he said softly.

And then, silence again, save his steady pulling at the briar pipe. Of a sudden, he leaned forward and drew her head backward so that he might look into her eyes.

"Hinny," he said fondly, "I'm afraid I'm getting old—and selfish."

"Selfish!" she smiled.

"I was wondering, to-day, what I should do without you—that's all."

She rose to her feet, and pushed the gray hair back from his temples.

"You're not going to get rid of me as easily as all that," she said laughingly.

"Ah! you're a wonderful little woman, Margaret,"

and he patted the cheek that was pressed against his own. . . . "Up ten thousand on the previous half-year—did you catch that? And every penny's yours when I'm gone. . . . Margaret, I wish I hadn't said that of young MacWhinnie."

A shadow rested on her face for a second.

"He'll forgive you, I'm sure," she said in a tone of voice that pleaded for the end of the subject.

"He's made wonderful headway out there."

"*We* always said that he would."

"We did, Margaret—we did. And he couldn't forget the old firm—could he? If we hadn't been full up with contracts at the moment, the chances are that I shouldn't have misread that letter of his. It was the 'in a position to confer' that I didn't like, although I can guess the official eye was on him while he was writing. . . . Margaret, my lass, let's have the 'nightcap,' and away I'll go to my roost. We're testing the boilers of a cruiser, first thing to-morrow morning, and if John Drender isn't there, the beggars'll scamp the job, and bang goes the reputation of the firm."

Margaret brought the decanter from the sideboard, and he filled his glass.

"Here's luck to you, Robert MacWhinnie," he said, shaking his head. "You didn't forget the old firm—did you? I'll not forget you for that. The luck's coming your way, or I'm a Dutchman."

And about the same time, twelve thousand miles away, Robert MacWhinnie was seated at a table, his head resting on his outstretched arms, his shoulders

shaking with sobs. The letter crushed in his right hand was from Dick Morrow :

"Robert, old friend, my heart is nigh breaking, and as I think of you reading this letter I am torn with grief. My poor Jean is gone. She died this morning—died in my arms, after only a few hours of suffering. All day yesterday she was at work with Lady Chiseldon and two other nurses; she came back to headquarters complaining only of slight fatigue; this morning, Lady Chiseldon summoned me. I saw, at once, that my brave Jean had contracted the scourge which we came here to fight. We did all we possibly could, but succeeded only in lessening the pain. Robert, I cannot write more. It is as though the roof of the world had fallen upon me. May God help you to bear the blow, even as I pray for strength. As soon as I can get away, I shall hurry to Tokio to see you.

"DICK."

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

THE PILLAR OF THE HOUSE

MORI, the child, was nearly ten years of age, and for two years she had been watching the fairy stories come true—stories told her beneath the cherry blossom from which she had stolen the pink and white of her cheeks, among the chrysanthemums where the elves had wandered to find the right shade of bronze and the wave for her hair, among the iris that had spared a little of their wondrous blue for the coloring of her big eyes. The great house had arisen on the banks of the Thames, just as he had said it would; the garden sloped to the very edge of the water, and there was the pagoda of her baby dreams, from which she could watch the silent flitting of the brown sails as they headed toward the open sea.

And half a mile farther down the river bank were the engineering works of MacWhinnie Brothers, with a massive signboard over the gates. The firm had been established two years. When Robert MacWhinnie returned from the Far East, eight years after the death of his sister, Jean, he took over a going concern

from a company that had fallen behind the times, and, with his two brothers, James and David, as junior partners, commenced by brushing the cobwebs from the corners of the yard, installing new machinery and instituting new methods.

"It'll be tough work for the first two years," he had warned them, "but once we are firmly established, there'll be no holding of us back."

The same generous disposition, the same manly striving to march straight forward as though there had never been a doubt in his heart or a speck to mar his sky; the temples were grayer, a few more lines ran away from the corners of the clear, resolute eyes and the determined mouth; but there was even greater energy in the throw of the broad shoulders, a stronger and more resonant ring in the voice. Ambition had not been checked by the burden imposed on him, rather had it received a spur. Mori, the child, had opened out before his eyes a new world of which he had never dreamed until she came; she almost—almost filled his life with her quaint imaginings and the fullness of her joy in his love. The eight years in the Eastern hemisphere had been wonder years, with new phases revealing themselves each succeeding day.

No need to dwell on the homecoming. The chance had occurred to take over the affairs of the old company, and it wasn't likely that a similar chance would occur for years. The fact that the firm of Drender, Masters and Co. was on the other side of the river, no more than a mile away, was not to be considered. This was the chance, and—and the child had reached an age when Western environment was essential. It

was for the child that he had to live now ; but it wasn't a burden ; he had come to regard it as the reward.

It was half an hour before dinner, and he had just changed "from a snow man into a cosy daddy." Mori came to the study and locked the door so that the governess should not interrupt ; she settled the cushions in the big easy chair, and "snuggled in" with him. This was the fairy hour that had never been forgotten or put aside for other things since she was three years old. It was the hour when the joy of possession, of guardianship, drove everything else from his mind—the hour of stories for which she would never be too old. . . . He had drawn the curtains aside so that she could watch the snow falling through the beam of light thrown across the grounds by the great lamp over the hall door, and, "You start it, darling," he whispered, pressing his cheek against hers.

"You're not *too* tired, are you, daddy?"

"I'm never too tired, Mori, darling, but you start it. What has it to be, to-night?"

"One day, daddy——"

"One day?" he echoed softly.

"One day, there was a man, and his name was——"

"And his name was Morrow. Ah! yes, you love that old story, don't you? Well, this man Morrow had traveled all over the world, all over the seas and the mountains, among the snow where all the houses were made of ice and the children went to school on sleighs ; among the black men near the Equator, where it was so hot that he could boil his kettle by setting it down in the sun. He was a splendid fellow, always laughing and trying to make other people laugh,

and——” And then followed the old, old story of adventures that made her big eyes sparkle, the while she “snuggled” closer.

And on this night there was a new story to add to the old ones; the hero of them all had suddenly emerged from a dark corner of the world; he had written to say that before many months had passed he might have crossed the ocean and arrived in England. Robert read portions of the letter to the delighted child:

“And tell my little sweetheart, O Mori San, that all these lone years I have been watching her grow up, watching from afar. She was only three years old when last I kissed her on the Bluff at Yokohama, but I seem to know exactly how tall she is, the particular shade of her curls, the length of her nose—it must be freckled, or I shall be keenly disappointed—and the color of her eyes. And tell her, daddy, that I’m bringing her a wonderful piece of ivory carving, carved by an old blind Filipino; and there’s a tiger-skin rug, and a boa constrictor that took such a fancy to me that he wanted to hug me until I hadn’t any breath left to say ‘Thank you!’ Tell her, daddy, that she mustn’t pretend not to understand when I speak to her in Japanese, or how to blow out the match when my tobacco is well alight.”

And Mori, shaking her head sagely, protested again and again that she hadn’t forgotten a single feature.

“He was very fond of you, Mori, darling,” Robert told her, with a little break in his voice, “so fond of you that when he stayed with us in the bungalow just before starting for the Philippines, I had to lie awake at night fearing that he would carry you off if I closed my eyes for an hour.”

And the stories being told, he rang for the govern-

ess; there was the usual plea for just one more, and the usual reply that grandfather would never forgive her for keeping him from his dinner.

Donald MacWhinnie, alert as ever, although the tinge of red had almost disappeared from the short, pointed beard, was already seated at the table in the long, oak-paneled dining room. He heard the "Good nights" at the foot of the stairs, the sound of the tender kisses as Mori wound her arms around Robert's neck, and he called out his promises of a "better story than daddy can tell ye, if ye wait till the morn'." As Robert came into the dining room, the little father gave him a sympathetic nod.

"A wonderfu' comfort, bairns, Rob?" he said gently.

"Wonderful." He was slipping the ring from his serviette.

"Fill your life just when you're—when you're beginning to think that there's naethin' left that's worth while." He was approaching the tragedy of "Dolores," and Robert was quick to divert the trend of conversation.

"Been down to the works to-day, father?"

"I just looked in, Rob."

Robert smiled. He knew that never a day passed without a visit being paid by the little gray-haired father who had come into his own, as always he had said he would.

"Just looked in," he repeated musingly, "an' had a bit crack wi' that new manager o' yours."

"MacGowan?"

"I didna ask his name; I asked him his job."

"A first-class man, father. He served his time with Drender and Masters."

"I dinna doubt it, Rob; I'd hae thought mair of him if he'd sarved it on the Clyde."

From which Robert gathered that MacGowan had placed a difficulty in the way of a model being made for Mr. Donald MacWhinnie, inventor. They had almost finished dinner before the little man spoke again, although his eyes had constantly sought Robert's.

"Ye havena been in the yard yoursel', Rob?"

"No," said Robert casually; "I had business in the city."

"Contracts?"

"Yes; rather important ones. I left David in charge."

The father sighed; then rested an elbow on the table.

"Did the little maid say onythin' about—about Tammas—Uncle Tammas?" he inquired.

Robert looked up quickly.

"Nothing at all. What do you mean, father?"

"He was here, to-day."

"Here! In my house?"

Donald's face straightened.

"Ye hae no objection, Rob? He's your brither."

Robert laughed at the suggestion.

"My dear father," he said, "my only regret is that I wasn't here to give him a welcome. It's the first time Thomas has paid us a call."

"There's nae need for a' the regrets, Rob," said the

little man, with a shake of the head. "Tammas didna come wi' ony olive-branch in his hand."

Robert's face assumed a serious expression.

"Why should he come in any other spirit?" he asked.

"No reason at a'; but ye know what Tammas is, or ought to be by this time. In all my life I've never met a man sae discontented. And he's my ain son, too. Tammas is a' looking for trouble, an' he's a' findin' it. I'm no so sure that his marriage did a' we hoped it would."

"But surely Thomas hasn't very much to be discontented about?"

Donald lifted his shoulders expressively.

"Ah, weel!" he said, "ye can bet she'll help him to find somethin'."

"Did he bring his wife with him?"

"She followed him in—followed him in."

Robert frowned, got up from his chair, and closed the door. He went back to the fireplace, and stood with his shoulders leaning against the mantelshelf.

"What did you mean by asking if Mori had said anything, father?"

The little man flicked his beard with the tip of a finger before replying.

"Because Mori was here when he cam'; that's a'; and Maggie had a word wi' the bairn—just a friendly word, Rob. Said she ought to feel that she was a lucky bairn, an' a' the rest of it. Ye know how a jealous woman havers when she thinks another body's bairns are better off than her ain?"

Robert's eyes were half closed, and the little father seemed unwilling to look up.

"Mori didn't say a word about it to me," said Robert, in a perplexed tone of voice. "I wonder why?"

"Mebbe," said Donald, "it was because I asked her to say naethin' about it."

"Father"—Robert's frown had deepened—"I hope you will never do anything of the sort again. Mori has never been taught to keep anything from me. . . . Now, let me hear about Thomas's trouble. I understood that he was doing splendidly with his dairy farm."

Donald's laugh began like wind escaping through a distant keyhole.

"Tammas is done wi' coos," he said, "an' it's nae mair than I expected. Ye should hae kept him at the lathe, Rob. Ye gave him too much time to think about ither things."

"He was asked to say what appealed most to him," said Robert, somewhat impatiently, "and he confessed that his heart wasn't in machinery. He wanted the open air—'God's free air,' were his words; to be confined in such a business as ours at the yard represented slavery to him."

"Ay, mebbe. But he's sold the business, anyway."

"It cost three thousand, all told."

"Wi' every modern invention. I dinna doubt ye for a moment. An' I'll wager he didna get half the amount for it."

Robert made no inquiry about the whereabouts of the money, although every penny had come out of his own pocket.

"And now?" he asked.

"Tammas has achieved the ambition of his life," said the little man; "he's joined politics—a paid man, if ye please—paid for speech-makin'—an' inspecting the conditions of labor. That's how he put it—put it to me, Rob. What do ye think of that? 'Ye're a comparatively young man,' he said, 'an' there's plenty of work for you to do if you feel like doin' it.' 'Thanks, Tam,' I said, 'but I'm awf'y comfortable here wi' Rob, an' naethin' short of a stick of dynamite'll get me out.' 'This is not your place,' he said; 'you should be in your ain house along wi' mither.' 'That's all right, Tam,' I said. 'Your mither is quite happy in the house that Rob had built for her at Ballyhoustie, where she can lord it over her neighbors; her sympathies are no wi' engineers, and my hairt is just sair wi'oot them. That's why I'm here instead o' vegetating at Ballyhoustie; the booming an' the hammering on the river is meat and drink to me, and I'm tired of running between Ballyhoustie and Rob's house like a dog humping round a strange kennel. Seems to me, Tammas,' I said, 'that I no sooner get a chair warmed in ane hoose or th' ither, but what someone comes along tae push me oot o' it.'"

Robert was very moody for a moment; then he said, with deep regret in his voice:

"I'm very sorry this should have happened. I had come to believe that we had done our best for everybody."

"An' so we hae," said Donald, content to take some share of the credit. "Frae the very first, Rob, we've considered the ithers, instead of considering ourselves

a little mair. But don't tak' this to hairt. Let Tammas gae his ain gait. And it's no Tammas so much as Mrs. Tammas."

Robert held up his hand reproachfully.

"You mustn't blame her, father," he said. "I've seen her only twice, but she gave me the impression of being a very simple-minded and worthy woman."

"It's the simple-minded anes, Rob, that ye have tae keep y'r eye on. The way she was talkin' tae the little maid! Why shouldna ye keep a governess? It's y'r ain money, an' y'r ain child. Why shouldna you have her taught paintin' an' music an' a' the rest of it? You dinna ask them tae pay the piper, do ye? An' if ye've been clever enough to mak' it possible for her tae be brought up as a lady, who should stand up an' protest agin it? Now, if it were somebody else's child that ye were wastin' y'r money on, they might hae something tae grumble about. An' ye are makin' a lady of her, Robert. The way she ups and says: 'Grandfaither, that's no grammar.' 'Grandfaither, ye shouldna eat wi' y'r knife.' 'Ye shouldna light y'r cigar twice.' The little rascal! She'll be a gran' lady some day, Rob. And, man, I'm tellin' ye, when I was your age an' younger, I wad hae gi'en the wor-rld to hae been able to do for my lass what ye are doin' for yours. Don't let this Tammas business upset ye. I dinna ken why he cam' down here, unless it was at the bidding o' that wife o' his. I always said that Tammas wad mak' a mistake, an' so he has. God be thankit that neither Jamie nor David hae offended agin their faither by marryin' beneath them. I dinna suppose either o' them will ever get marrit. They're

no given that way. An' I tremble, Rob, when I think what y'r mither wad do if onything happened to Tammas's wife. There wadna be a single soul left for her tae quarrel wi'."

Robert paid little attention to the old man's ramblings. He was wondering what had actually been said to the child, and he felt it keenly that anyone should go out of their way to teach her to keep anything from him. Apparently Donald divined what was passing in his son's mind, for, lowering his voice, he said:

"There was nae mention, Rob, o' the bairn's mither, so dinna let that disturb you. A' that Tammas's wife said—a' that you could tak' ony exception tae—was her reference tae John Drender's daughter; an' I dinna see how that had onything to do wi' her. An' what's mair, I dinna suppose that onythin' she or Tammas might say wad stay on John Drender's mind ony longer than water wad stay on a duck's back."

"After all these years," said Robert, infusing a little bitterness into his voice, "they might allow Mr. Drender's name to rest."

"Exactly what I said, Rob. It was a matter for y'rsel', no for them."

"I don't follow you, father."

The little man fidgeted with his beard.

"What I mean is," he said falteringly, "that what happened between you and John Drender's daughter didna affect them in the slightest. Probably they'd hae been nae better off if you were John Drender's son-in-law to-day."

Robert crossed from the fireplace to the table, and

placed his hand on his father's shoulder. Speaking very gently—almost entreatingly—he said to him:

"I thought it was agreed between us, father, that no further mention should be made in this house of Miss Drender. I say again I am deeply sorry that Thomas and his wife should have come here in my absence and said anything that would lend false impressions to my little girl. I thought that everything was going along so smoothly. And only to-night I was telling Mori of a great joy that was coming to us—the return of an old friend whom I had given up for dead. When I came in to dinner to-night, I was feeling like a boy, instead of an old man of thirty-seven; but what you've told me seems to have damped my spirits. Understand me rightly, father, for you may have an opportunity of meeting Thomas before long. I have made up my mind to live for my little girl. My life, although it has been successful, as you like to say, has not been so full of happiness that I can afford to lose one smile of Mori's; and to teach her to hide things from me would be the cruelest reward that either Thomas or anyone else could conceive. If I thought that the foolish jealousies of which you spoke a moment ago actually existed, I should be tempted to close the doors of my house. Do you quite understand?"

"Quite," said the little man. . . . "Ye're no greet-in', are ye, Rob? If I'd thought you'd tak' it like this, I'd hae said naethin' about it."

"I'm trying to take it in the right way," said Robert, "and while we're in this mood and on this subject, we'll deal with another matter, which may appear

trivial to you; but I fancy that when I've expressed my feelings on it, you'll see how wrong it was, and how undignified."

"It's my turn now, Rob, I suppose?" said the little man. "Mebbe ye want tae git rid o' me? Say the wor-rd, an' I'm off to Ballyhoustie before ye know whaur ye are. But how I should get along wi'oot th' wee maid to talk tae, I dinna ken."

Robert patted him on the shoulder.

"I don't want to get rid of you, father. I like you to be here. I like to feel that you're happy, and that you have no responsibilities to weigh you down. But I've heard from two or three sources that you can't allow your old antipathy to Drender and Masters to die down."

Donald sat bolt upright in his chair, and the small eyes flashed indignantly.

"What wad ye hae me do, Rob?" he asked. "Tak' off ma hat when Mr. John Drender rolls by in his carriage? Wad ye hae me do that?"

"Not if Mr. John Drender didn't remove his hat to you," said Robert. "But, knowing him as I do, and feeling, as I do, that he takes some little pride in having given Robert MacWhinnie his start in life, I doubt that he would forget that courtesy."

"Man, what a tradesman ye mak'! If ye were in the grocery line, ye'd hang out a sign that the goods o' the man on the ither side o' the street were better than your ain."

"And that's another fallacy that you must get out of your mind, father. I have noticed that both David and Jamie encourage it, but it's wrong. Drender and

Masters are not rivals of MacWhinnie Brothers, although we are engineers even as they. But their work is of a totally different nature. They cover phases of engineering work which we do not touch. But the point I was coming to: I have heard of your haunting the gates of Drender and Masters about the time the workmen are coming out. I don't believe that you've ever said anything that was uncalled for, but the mere fact of your being there is not to the credit of our firm. And I hear, too, that on several occasions you have patronized—shall I say?—Drender and Masters, by giving them commissions to execute some model or other."

The little man laughed softly to himself.

"Bless ye, Rob," he said, "I hae naethin' but kindness in my hairt for John Drender, an' if I've waited outside his works so that he should see me wi' a cigar in my mouth and comfort in my body, it was just because I wanted tae show him what a clever son I had. And, Robert, if ye were my age, an' if ye'd led the hard life I've led, ye'd understand the wonderfu' joy I get out of walking up to the gates of Drender and Masters a minute after the time when, as a younger man, I was supposed to be on the lathe—walkin' up tae them, and walkin' back, an' saying to masel' (although, mebbe, the gatekeeper might overhear me), 'I dinna think I'll come in to-day, Mr. Drender. I'm takin' a holiday.'"

"All right," said Robert. "I'm more than pleased to find that there's no malice at the bottom of it all. There's room on this river for both Drender and Masters and MacWhinnie Brothers; and I may assure you,

father, that I regard the old firm with the deepest of respect. I'm proud to think that it was from that yard I set out for the Far East. I'm grateful, and always shall be, for the splendid opportunities which John Drender went out of his way to give me."

"The old man is ageing," Donald interrupted, in a conciliatory manner. "I always had a profound respect for John Drender masel'. But that's neither here nor there. They tell me, Rob, they tell me that the old man doesna expect to hae control of the yard very much longer."

"That's news to me," said Robert.

"What I mean is that he's no as active as he used to be. We a' hae to go some time or ither."

"He's the halest man on the river, father. Only yesterday I saw him, in the distance, superintending the setting of a propeller blade."

"An' cussin' an' swearin', I'll be bound."

"There you go again, father."

"Ay, Rob, but the old man was always sae interestin' when he was cussin' an' swearin'. Larned it on the Tyne, he did, an' it's the ane thing a Clyde man envies in a Tynesider. But I believe there's something in what I'm tellin' on ye, that he's no long for this wor-rl'd. Else, wad he be content tae let his daughter gi'e so much o' her time to charity an' that-like? There was a time when he couldna bear her out o' his sight, but now it seems the right thing for her to be awa' on church work, or nursing, or onythin' that'll wipe out some o' the sins o' her old faither agin the time when he'll hae to answer for them."

"Miss Drender is doing a very noble work, father,"

said Robert earnestly, "and I don't doubt that her father has encouraged it. Only the other day the Bishop paid a high tribute to the work that Miss Drender has done in the slums. It was she who organized the Nursing Society. She's given up the whole of her life to the helping of the poor, and that without any promise of reward."

"She's a fine woman," said the old man, nodding his head, "and God forbid that Donald MacWhinnie should ever say onythin' to her detriment. . . . An' she does get the money out o' the stony anes, Rob. She must hae raised some thousands of pounds for these funds of hers."

"She is tireless in her work," said Robert, and for an instant his eyes glowed.

"Ay," said the old man. "And for his ain sake I hope John Drender isna allowed to handle them."

"Father," said Robert quietly, "I'm beginning to fear that you live too near Drender and Masters."

"But she's a fine woman, Rob," said the old man, swerving dexterously away, "an' when I pass her in the street I'm a-feelin' like greetin'."

"Why, father?"

"Such a waste, Rob! There's a woman for ye!" he sighed. "An' when I think o' the Maggie Drummonds . . . Rob, ye've been awf'y blunt wi' me. I'll be blunt wi' ye, just for ance. There never was an' never will be another man like ye, an' if I thought that it wad be for your benefit, I'd give up this old carcass as willin' as willin'. But somehow I dinna think I shall ever forgi'e ye for leaving Margaret."

Robert turned to the cigar cabinet, so that his father should not see his twitching face.

"We must have an early interview with Thomas," he called over his shoulder, affecting brightness. "We must set the old fellow's mind at ease."

"An' that's like ye, too, Rob. . . . Thousands of pounds she must hae raised for charity, an' on'y yesterday I met her in the street, an' if I'd had a few coppers they'd hae been hers. Smiled that nicely, too, she did, same as we were old friends. That's what I like about her. And there wasn't a dry stitch on her. She'd been makin' a round of a' the collectors for some Christmas fund or ither. She must have been dead tired, because the snow was lyin' heavy, but there she was, carryin' around new bills for the collectors tae paste over their stalls. 'Only a Thousand Pounds More Required'—'Only Eight Hundred More'—'Only Seven Hundred More.' One o' the little women told me that John Drender's daughter came round every hour. It's for a new nursing home or somethin'. . . . Are ye listenin' tae me, Robert, or are ye countin' y'r cigars?"

"I'm listening to every word, father."

"They've been tryin' tae raise five thousand, but"—with a touch of exultation—"they didna get it. They were five hundred pounds short when they gi'ed up the collectin' for the day. . . . What was it ye said about Tammas?"

"I was saying that we must get hold of him as soon as possible, and find out exactly how he is situated."

"I'll find out what he's done wi' the money that he got for the farm," said Donald, with a knowing wink.

"Like as not, the Drummond brood are fattening on it."

When the old man had retired for the night, Robert MacWhinnie wrote a letter to his bankers, instructing them to send anonymously the sum of five hundred pounds to the nursing fund organized by Miss Margaret Drender. And, that done, he made the round of the house, as was his custom, then slipped noiselessly into Mori's room to kiss the little sleeper before retiring to his own couch.

CHAPTER II

“MACWHINNIE BROTHERS”

THE opportunity to interview Brother Thomas did not occur until some months later, and then the task fell to Robert. By this time, the little father had gone north, to warm another chair in the house at Ballyhoustie, which had been one of Robert's first considerations when he became a man of means. These visits to the north were never of very long duration, for the changed conditions of life had brought but little sobered sweetness to Mrs. MacWhinnie. The old neighbors whom she had hoped to impress with the greatness of her sons had offered no opening for such impressions. They had drifted from her, or, rather, from the changed Mrs. MacWhinnie; they had known her as a hard-working, companionable body in the old days. Indeed, the new environment had imposed so many penalties that she was unable rightly to appreciate the privileges.

It was in the late afternoon when Robert received word that Mr. Thomas MacWhinnie was awaiting him in the office. At the time, Robert was stripped to the waist in the engine room, and as grimy as any of the engineers gathered about him. The trouble with the mechanism was hard to locate, and three valuable hours had been spent by the senior partner of the firm,

who would have stayed there all night rather than confess failure to the men who had come to regard him as the finest engineer on the river.

When he reached the office, he found his eldest brother restlessly pacing the floor of the private room into which he had been ushered. It might be a most inconvenient time to receive visitors, but there was no doubting the sincerity of Robert's welcome.

"Sit down, Thomas, old fellow, and let me have all the news. I've been trying to get into touch with you for some months, but this new work of yours seems to hurry you from one place to another without giving you any time to see your brothers. How's the world using you? And how's your good wife?"

The years had dealt very unkindly with Thomas. He had never been robust, but at forty he was thinner, and more haggard, and more discontented-looking than when at twenty he had satisfied himself that he was an Ishmael. He had grown a beard, long and ragged, and with some of the fiery hue that had once distinguished his father's. He wore his hair long in sympathy, and that, too, was ragged; but his clothes were of fairly smart cut, and the broad-brimmed felt hat rested jauntily, if not defiantly, on his head.

"Sit down, Thomas," Robert urged, "and take your hat off. Try to make yourself comfortable. We're not accustomed to receiving visitors here, so we don't stand on ceremony."

"I can talk better if I walk about," said Thomas, with the gesture of the paid orator. "I called to see you some months ago, but you were out."

"Yes, father told me about your visit. I was in

the city that day, trying to worry contracts out of old-fashioned people who seem to look at a young concern with suspicion, as though it were natural so to do."

"And how is trade?" Thomas was walking somewhat rapidly up and down the floor; he appeared to be stamping inspiration out of the carpet.

"Quite good," said Robert cheerfully. "We're young, as I say, so we mustn't expect too much. We have several contracts in hand that should leave a sound margin if we get them through as speedily as I anticipate. But you never can tell, Thomas. You never know what may happen. But with the loyalty of the men beyond doubt, we're comparatively free from what, with all due deference to you, we may regard as the greatest danger of all—a strike at a most inopportune time."

"Don't be too optimistic," said Thomas warningly. "Human nature is only human nature, and nowadays working men have greater minds than their own to think for them."

Robert nodded pleasantly.

"You haven't come here to talk politics, have you, Thomas? No, of course not. Father told me quite a lot of news about you, and I was somewhat anxious to get in touch with you, to find out how you're fixed."

"I haven't been out of the country," said Thomas coldly, and to insinuate that he might have been found, if the seeker had shown any spirit in his search.

Robert changed his tone immediately.

"You must forgive me, Thomas. We've had a

busy time of it during the last few months, and considerable worry."

"There are three of you to share it, anyway."

"True," said Robert, still in a brisk, cheerful tone, "but even three heads can't overcome everything, when the question of capital arises."

"You fog me, Robert."

"Simple enough. If we could have increased our capital six months ago, we might have undertaken a great deal more work—more profitable work."

"And why don't you increase your capital?"

Thomas had assumed the attitude of a cross-examining lawyer, but Robert refused to see it.

"My dear Thomas," he said half jocularly, "where do you suppose we were to get it?"

Thomas turned to face him.

"I don't understand you," he said, in a monotone.

"I couldn't put in any more."

"No, of course not."

"Why that, Thomas—why that cynical note?"

"Did it sound cynical? I was only surprised by your reply."

"Why should you be surprised, Thomas?" A slight pallor showed beneath the grime on Robert's face; Thomas's demeanor was arousing a spirit of resentment.

"You're talking as though you were on the verge of bankruptcy—as they all talk when they fear an appeal to their pockets."

"What appeal were you going to make, Thomas?"

"I haven't said that I was going to make any appeal. I was only feeling my way."

"To my pocket?"

Thomas threw up his head indignantly.

"Don't give yourself airs, Robert. You have the reputation for being stand-offish, but—but I know you."

Robert forced back the natural retort, and waved his hand genially.

"Thomas, old fellow," he said, "if you're worried in the slightest about the farm and the sale and so forth, take it for granted that it's quite all right. Look here, why don't you come down to my——"

"Of course it's all right. What have you at the back of your mind, Robert?" He had stopped in his perambulations, and was glaring at his brother.

Robert took a deep breath to steady himself.

"Supposing—supposing that you hadn't made a bad shot when you spoke of the verge of bankruptcy; what then?"

Thomas started at the change of tone, but something like a sneer crept into his face.

"If there were anything in it," he replied, "I should have only one comment to make."

"Now's your chance," said Robert challengingly.

"That you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Why, pray?" The smile that flickered in Robert's eyes at the preposterousness of the remark died quickly away.

Thomas asked superciliously:

"Well, whose fault would it be?"

"I don't follow you."

"You mean that you don't wish to follow me. The suggestion's plain enough."

"Too plain to be serious."

"This is not my day for jesting"—lugubriously and in his best platform manner. "I came to see you on a matter which ought to have made direct appeal to your sense of justice—the sense of justice with which you're credited."

"And you haven't even hinted at the nature of it."

"No, because you anticipated me, as they all do when they smell a rat."

"I've been in an engine pit all the afternoon," said Robert, a little wearily, "and the only smell in my nostrils is that of grease and carbon."

"You anticipated me by holding up the bogey of bankruptcy."

"It was half in jest."

"And I told you that this wasn't the time for jesting."

"Thomas—Thomas, where is your sense of humor?"

"Where would it be, if I returned to my committee, and informed them that the reputedly wealthy man, described in the newspapers as the genius of the river—the man who had brought a fortune out of the Far East—my own brother—had flung lame subterfuge in my face when asked to show his appreciation of humanity's demands?"

"What committee? And what evidence of my appreciation do you require?"

"Perhaps you haven't heard of the New Englanders?"

"I'm sorry to say that my reading is practically confined to the trade papers."

"We're not Utopian in our ideals."

"You're terribly lachrymose, old fellow"—with a cheery smile.

"One cannot look on misery—abject misery—with laughter in one's heart."

"Come, Thomas, let's have it!"

"It's a regeneration scheme."

"And a very worthy one."

"There are thousands of men who are waiting for the one chance, and we're going to give it to them."

"Where are they? And what are they doing?"

"In prison, breaking their hearts because of the hardness of the world."

"You're going to take them out?"

"Organize a colony and attempt a task from which successive governments have always shrunk."

Robert rose from his chair, and slapped his brother on the shoulder.

"Thomas, my boy, I'll take it back. You have a sense of humor."

Thomas swung round angrily.

"To laugh at a man's principles, Robert, is the cheapest form of criticism. All principles deserve some consideration."

Robert affected gravity on the instant.

"I'm not laughing at your principles, Thomas," he said, "because I'm not certain in my own mind what they amount to."

"Anyway, you're inclined to treat my remarks lightly."

"On the contrary, I should never treat lightly anything that you might say. It was the somewhat airy

way in which you talked of regenerating a horde of worthless scoundrels, men who wouldn't work even if they had the opportunity given them."

"Yes, yes," said Thomas, with a bitter smile, "you have imbibed all the old prejudices against the workingman, against——"

"You're wrong, Thomas. I set great store by the ability of the average workingman. Are we not dependent on his loyalty and his skill?"

"If you valued their loyalty, you wouldn't be so ready to smile at the suggestion I have put before you. One of these days, Robert, you will be made to value the loyalty of the workingman."

A message was brought in from the yard. Mr. MacGowan, the manager, wished to speak to Mr. Robert.

"Five minutes," said Robert to the boy, "and I shall be there."

Thomas watched the closing of the door with belligerency glowing in his eyes.

"Now," said Robert, "let's settle this little trouble of yours, if we can, Thomas. Tell me exactly what it is that you require. Not money, I hope?"

Thomas made no reply.

"Because I'll tell you frankly that at present the firm isn't in a position to be philanthropic. In fact, if we, ourselves, could lay our hands on a little more capital, we might be in a much better position than we are."

"May I ask what's happened to the capital?"

"You may ask, Thomas, but I don't know that I'm under any obligation to answer you."

"I think you are," said Thomas. "I'm asking you as a brother. Not that I shall be surprised or disappointed if you don't answer me. There's nothing discreditable about the firm, is there, that you're afraid to tell me? Or, shall I ask David? I suppose David would be in a better position even than you to say what was wrong with the firm. I understand that you keep his nose to the desk pretty closely. I was sorry for him when last I saw him. And then there's Jamie. Is he another of your slaves? Robert, I'm sorry that I've had to speak like this to you; but you've brought it on yourself."

"Do I understand," said Robert quietly—and now there was nothing like mirth in either his voice or his eyes—"that you were sent by your committee, or volunteered to come, to find out if we were ready to contribute to any wild-cat scheme?"

"I came of my own free will," said Thomas, "believing that my brother Robert hadn't changed—that a little success hadn't turned his head. And it's not a wild-cat scheme. It's one based on careful analysis of human nature, and behind it all is the ennobling desire to help those who are unable to help themselves."

"We were talking about the farm just now," said Robert. "May I ask what has become of the purchase money? . . . You needn't answer, Thomas. I can quite believe that it forms the basis of the fund for the regeneration, et cetera. Well, there's an end of it."

"No, it's not an end of it, Robert!" Thomas struck the table with his fist. "I remember the day," he said, with increasing violence, "when you used to say that

nothing should stand between you and your ambition. Robert, you're not the only one in the family that has ambition; and if mine doesn't tend toward the accumulation of wealth, it's equally great and worthy. I've flung my whole heart into the work I've taken up. I feel it. It has become part of me. The cries of the oppressed are insistent, and if I die fighting their cause I shall feel that there is some glory in it."

Robert regarded him pathetically.

"There was always a revolutionary banner over your head, Thomas," he said, "and no one admired you more than I did for the hours you used to devote to your subject. You're older than I am, but I think that I have seen as much of the world as you have. Leave these hastily conceived schemes to the others. There's plenty of good work to which you may put your hand, and I'm willing to talk it over with David and Jamie—to see what we can do in the way of making a fresh start for you."

"I'm not a beggar," Thomas retorted. "I don't know that I owe you anything, and after that remark of yours we'll forget any tie that used to bind us."

"Thomas, man! You can't be serious. You're so different from what you used to be! I can hardly believe that it's my brother that's standing there doing his level best to provoke a quarrel."

"And I warn you, Robert, that my interest in the workers, in humanity, is so great that I should never allow family ties to sway me. The Cause should come first."

"There's been a stoppage in the engine room," said Robert, somewhat curtly, "and every minute that en-

gine's stopped means a loss to the firm. Somebody must do some work. And I say again that I'm sorry you should have come to see me in this spirit."

"Don't drive me too far, Robert," and Thomas wagged a forefinger warningly. "I could say things that would hurt you deeply, but I don't want to say them. You're not playing the game."

"What game?" asked Robert, wondering how long this burlesque was going to continue.

"You're different, that's all," said Thomas. "When you whine to me about a shortage of capital——"

"I'm not whining at all. We're doing very nicely, thank you, and if we get the contracts we expect, the firm will be able to hold its head as high as any other on the river."

"It's a good thing for the firm," said Thomas dryly, "that David and Jamie haven't added to their responsibilities. They're both single men and likely to remain so."

"You're drifting again, Thomas."

"I mean that if there is anything in your story about this shortage of capital, it would be much more serious if David and Jamie were married and had children, and lived in fashionable houses on the river, and kept armies of servants to look after their children—French governesses, music masters, and what not—and if——"

"Thomas, old fellow!" Robert's voice was full of pain.

"And if, in order to feed their vanity, they gave away large sums of money to questionable charities."

Robert held out his hand.

"Come again another time, Thomas," he said coaxingly. "I refuse to believe that this is my brother talking."

"I'll repeat everything I've said," was the truculent reply. "You owe a duty to your brothers, Robert MacWhinnie. I want nothing that you've got, but I warn you that David and Jamie are not serfs, and the time will come when they'll have done with what I call the arrogance of newly acquired wealth. Those who stand outside see a deal of what's going on inside. I suppose that if I went to David and Jamie to enlist their sympathies in the Cause I have at heart, they would be able only to shrug their shoulders and point to you. I know that in your mind you're saying that it's your money, that you made it, that you started the firm of MacWhinnie Brothers. But, did you? Do you ever try to think of what we went through as youngsters in order that you might be given an opportunity to push yourself to the front?"

Robert went to the door.

"I'll ring for Jamie," he said. "I'm afraid I cannot spare you any more of my time."

A clerk answered the bell.

"Ask Mr. James if he can spare me a moment," said Robert.

The clerk gave the visitor a quick glance, then looked again at Robert.

"Mr. James is away, sir," he said falteringly, "at Liverpool. The Waterloo Cup is being run to-day."

Robert dismissed the clerk with a nod, and closed the door. Without looking at Thomas, he said musingly: "Jamie is very interested in another regenera-

tion scheme, Thomas—the regeneration of greyhounds. We'll try David."

The reply brought by the clerk was that Mr. David was in Paris, on firm's business. And, again, Robert nodded a dismissal; and as he went back to the middle of the room, he said, in a casual way: "I do hope the boy didn't forget his golf clubs."

It was a mere coincidence that three minutes later the telephone bell rang. The call was from the Gratz Hotel; the head chef wished to speak to Mr. David MacWhinnie. Robert held a second receiver toward Thomas, who took it.

"Mr. David MacWhinnie is in Paris at the moment," he replied to the chef, "but I'll take any message that you may have for him."

"In Paris?" came a surprised voice. "But what of ze banquet to Mam'selle Fricot?"

"Don't know her," said Robert.

"*Mon Dieu!*" came an excited exclamation. "Mam'selle Fricot—*première danseuse!* Mr. MacWhinnie is giving a banquet in her honor to-night at the Gratz Hotel, and I wished to know——"

"Yes, I'll take it all down," said Robert, reaching for a pencil, and sighing deeply as he did so.

"It isn't fair to David," said Thomas sullenly, throwing down his receiver.

"I'll take his message, anyway," said Robert. . . .

"Yes, M'sieur le chef? I'll take the message."

"Bien! I have created ze great dish—ze Fricasse Fricot."

"Spell it," said Robert dully. There was a moment of silence. "Cut off," he said at last, turning to

Thomas. Then, as he rolled up his sleeves preparatory to returning to the engine room: "I'm sorry to hear you say that David wasn't looking himself when you met him the other day," he said. "Good-by, Thomas. Somebody must do some work."

CHAPTER III

SYMPATHY

THE day's work done, he was on his way home, and the aching of his limbs because of the exertions in the yard was nothing to the pain in his heart. To Thomas he had shown a brave face, but not since the death of brown-haired Jean in far-away Japan had he been so utterly crushed in spirit. He had asked no reward for baring his shoulders to another's burden, and the world seemed determined that he should have none. He walked home, as always he did, that being the only form of exercise his work would permit of. Usually the roar and hum of the traffic and the droning of the city's workers as they spread homeward, away from the hub of toil, kept his mind from dwelling on the past, even exalted him, for it was good to feel that he was one of them—one who filled a niche in God's scheme of labor; this night the droning seemed to have changed to sighing—sighing because he was not of them; he was alone, and the sense of loneliness weighed upon him. Among all those thousands he was a stranger. His heart might be aching—what was it to them?

And Jean's broken words came back over the years—the strained, pleading cry as she knelt in "Charity

Corner"—and called to him for pity: "I wanted sympathy, and you'd gone!"

A little sympathy would have meant so much to him. A little sympathy, a little less of the selfishness that was making his burden greater than it was, and he could have "plugged ahead," as dear old Dick Morrow would have said, believing that some day the clouds would break, and the sun come streaming forth.

"I wanted sympathy, and you'd gone."

And somewhere, on the farther bank of the river, hidden behind the gaunt masts of idle ships that fringed the water, among the black and gray of hulls and warehouse walls, yonder, where his eyes turned every morning when he rose from sleep, where they rested for a little while before he turned away from the window at night, there was the sympathy of which he couldn't avail himself. If only he could brush aside the mist that separated them! If only he could *forget* one phase of the burden, he knew that her dear heart would come back to his for the sheltering love that he could give it.

And the years were as cruel as the world; they were rushing on, forgetful of what he had sacrificed, of what he had missed; indifferent to the deeper gray of the temples. . . .

He saw her that evening as he walked homeward. Her dear face, yearning, wistful, and as old as his own, yet retaining all its early beauty of repose, lifted, as it were, from out of the throng, and looked toward him. A cab drew up beside the pavement; she stepped out of the jostling crowd. The driver leaned forward to receive his instructions—how Robert envied the

man his privilege!—and just before she passed into the vehicle she looked back again. He was twenty or thirty yards from her, but he *knew* that a gentle smile of forgiveness dwelt for an instant in her eyes; he knew that the tears welled up to hide him from her. And she was gone, leaving her name trembling upon his lips. But fleeting though the vision had been, it gave him fresh courage; the tired limbs swung more freely and without the pain that had wracked them a moment before; his eyes cleared; he saw the beacon in the far distance, and his ears caught the laughter of the river as it tumbled toward the sea; the droning of the city toilers as they recounted to each other the incidents of the day swelled into music, and the warmth of the evening sky enfolded him.

It was dusk when he reached the garden gate. A Japanese lantern glowed in the tiny pagoda set among the rhododendrons, and a slim little elf stole out of the deepening gray of twilight to give him welcome.

“Mori, darling!”

“Dear daddy!”

And gone was the memory of base ingratitude. He picked the child up in his arms, and pressed his cheek against hers; and as she wound her little warm arms around his neck, as her long brown hair was blown against his face, as he felt her heart beating in ecstasy against his, he *knew* that no sacrifice is ever allowed to pass unnoticed.

Mori was permitted to stay up to dinner that night (he wanted sympathy); she was his little housekeeper for once; she waited upon him, urged him to have some more of this and the merest portion of that, and

wondered aloud if he had been trying to do too much during the day, and if he were looking quite so well as when he left in the morning, and whatever he would be likely to do if she were not there to attend to him. And when coffee was cleared, she found his big briar pipe, and insisted on charging it—insisted on trying the draught—and then—and then she “snuggled in” beside him on the deep-seated armchair, and:

“You start it, my darling,” he whispered tenderly.

“One day, daddy, one day there was a man.”

He had turned the lights low; the corners of the room were in shadow, and out of the shadow the faces of Jean and Margaret seemed to creep as though they, too, wished to listen to the story.

“One day, my darling, there was a poor man, a beggar, who loved a beautiful princess. And she loved him because she believed in him. But something happened to keep them apart. Something happened to lead the princess to fear that the man didn’t love her any more.”

“But why didn’t he tell her, daddy?”

“Because—because he couldn’t tell her without hurting someone else. But he did love her; he knew that he would never love anyone as he loved her. The years passed, and he saw her only seldom, and then from a great distance. And he began to grow old, or to think that he was growing old; and everybody—well, nearly everybody—was unkind to him. They shrugged their shoulders when they passed him on the road, and soon—soon they began to throw mud and stones when they saw him coming. He bore with it all, because he believed that the princess still loved

him, and that one day they would meet and love each other as they used to. But the days went by, and the distance between them widened, and he began to ask himself if there was any more joy in life for him. And just when he had almost persuaded himself that there was nothing for him save stones and mud, a little fairy—just like you, my darling—crept out of the grass and weeds by the side of the road—crept to where he was sitting with his hands over his eyes. She called to him so softly that for a long while he paid no attention. Then she drew away one of his hands, and when she saw the tears flowing down his cheeks, she climbed on his knee and kissed them all away. He opened his eyes, and placed his arm around her—just like this, darling—for he saw how beautiful she was, and feared that she might fly away. He asked her: ‘Where did you come from?’ and she said, ‘I have been near you a long while, but your eyes were so full of trouble that you couldn’t see me.’ ‘What an old duffer I must be!’ he said, and already he was feeling as happy as could be. ‘Where have you been hiding?’ ‘Just behind your trouble,’ she told him, and laughed so heartily that the echoes raced over the banks at the side of the road. ‘If you hadn’t been thinking so much about your troubles, you would have seen me long ago,’ she told him. ‘And where are you going?’ he asked very nervously, because he felt that he didn’t deserve so beautiful a fairy. ‘I’ll stay with you,’ she said, ‘but you must never let Trouble come between us again.’ And so he tightened his arms around her—just like this, darling!—and he held her to him, and . . .”

CHAPTER IV.

WEAK LINKS

THE pagoda at the bottom of the garden had been transformed by the snow and a little imagination on the part of Robert into an Esquimau's hut when Mrs. MacWhinnie, in Ballyhoustie, decided that Robert had been left long enough in peace. She wrote him a letter of many pages, and it was not without pathos when the narrowness of it all was set on one side.

"MY DEAR BOY.—I've begged and prayed of your father to write this for me, but you know what he is. There are times, Rob, when I ask myself if all this change has been for the best—that's when I look at your father. If I said that he was getting sairly fat and lazy, it would no be a sin against him or my conscience. I mind the time when he was a riveter on the Clyde and had to get out of his bed at six in the morning, rain, hail, or shine. 'Ay, ay,' he used to grummel, 'it's a dog's life. Gie me a cottage and a pound a week and I'll ask no mair.' And what's happened? There he sets on the fence watching the potatoes grow and thinking out an invention to dig them up in the autumn by machinery. Anything to save himself a bit of labor.

"Tammas's wife, Maggie, came to Ballyhoustie a week or two gone, and I've no been myself sin. She went about the house with a look in her eyes that telled me as plain as plain that she didn't think I was fit for my new surroundings. Sat down on the chair as if she expected it to squeak, and

said it fair brought her hairt into her mouth to see your father on the carpet with his dirty boots. She's a nice bit body, but her tongue seems to be loose at both ends. It seems you've been having her down there on a visit. She'll no get over your furniture till her dying day, and wee Mori has reminded her of all she never got herself when she was a baby. Poor jealous body, she didn't know how to hold herself as she reckoned up what it must have cost ye to bring the bairn up as far as you have. Tam's not having much luck, and from what I could gather from her, he's no happy in his mind. Rob, man, we'll have to put our heads together to see what can be done for him.

"I suppose Jamie told you that he came up to see his old mother a while back. I hardly knew the lad, he was that fine. Like he would do, he went to the old cottage first, forgetting that we'd been here for a couple of years and more. He said that he walked right up to the old door before he noticed that we must have gone, for the creature that's living there now had cut down all the hollyhocks in the corner of the garden by the rockery, and there was no a sweet-william in the place, you know how I loved sweet-williams; and the white rose by the gate was no there, and she had chickens and young ducks running about the bit grass under the window. Rob, man, you'll think your old mother's getting saft, but it fair made my hairt bleed to listen to him. When you were all bairns—long before we went to the south—I used to spend hours in that bit garden, and there was no a flower in it that I hadn't bred from cuttings and the like. If I'd been slapped in the face I couldn't have been hurt more than when Jamie told me what the creature had done.

"How's David? I worrit a deal about him, 'cause after all he's only a bairn—he'll always be a bairn to me.

"When the weather clears a bit, I'll try to get down, but it's a sight of money to spend on the railways; they'd take your last penny from you and no say thanks; that's the way of the world, so I tell your father: 'Get it, stick to it, and get some more.'

"If you should happen to have a little to spare, you could make your old mother wonderfully happy by buying that cottage. I'd turn the creature out of it, to-morrow.

"Your father is awfy happy and fat as I said, and if he could only leave the inventing alone for a while he'd be a better man in temper than he is."

Mr. MacWhinnie had enclosed a note of his own:

"Robert, boy, if you should happen to think of anything I might be doing down your way, you'd better drop me a line. I'm sick for a change."

But Robert was not disposed to let his mind dwell on the bubbles of trouble that had arisen in Ballyhoustie; for the news that had come in the second letter overshadowed all else. Even Mori was a victim to his ecstatic mood, for he was all impatience to reach the office. He was burning with a desire to be first with the news, but the morning newspapers anticipated him. When he arrived at the office, David and Jamie were awaiting him. He clashed the door behind him, and cried out like a schoolboy:

"Boys, I have great news!"

"We've had it already," said David. "The newspapers are full of it," and he flung a copy across the table in Robert's direction.

Jamie, tall and thin, like his brother Thomas, and somewhat esthetic of bearing, affected calm, although David had impressed on him the significance of the news. Robert picked up the newspaper, and read aloud the column that had been marked by his brother.

MacWhinnie Brothers, the youngest firm on the river, had been honored—that was how the newspaper writer put it—had been honored by the Chilian Government. The firm was to "engine" three destroyers,

and the most remarkable part about it was that their tender had been higher than the tenders of three or four old-established firms. The writer of the article found in this fact a tribute to the genius of Robert MacWhinnie, whose name had been made in the Far East. Following the comments of the trade writer were abbreviated interviews with several well-known firms of engineers, the heads of which had been asked to express an opinion on the Chilian decision. The name of John Drender, of Drender, Masters and Company, was prominent—at least, to Robert's eyes—among those who had been drawn by the interviewer. And John Drender had said this: "The honor is shared by Drender and Masters, for it was here that Robert MacWhinnie learned his trade. If the work depends on the skill of Robert MacWhinnie, it will be well done."

Robert dropped the newspaper.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked of the other two. "Isn't it just splendid?"

"It's a kick in the ribs for old Drender," said David superciliously.

"If we can put it through," said Jamie, still affecting a calm that he didn't feel.

Robert turned on him with an outburst almost of indignation.

"If we can put it through?" he echoed. "Of course we shall put it through! Somehow, I felt that this was coming to us, just when we needed it most. This is going to be the making of the firm, if we put our backs into it. . . . David, what have you to say about it?"

"I haven't had time to think about it yet," said David cautiously.

"And you, Jamie? Come, now, be candid. Don't you think that this is the greatest thing that's happened to us?"

"I was thinking," said Jamie, "that we should look rather cheap in the eyes of our rivals, if we found that we'd bitten off more than we could comfortably chew."

"Rivals?" said Robert, with a laugh. "We have no rivals. If you and David put your hearts into it, we'll show this sleepy old river how work should be done."

Jamie glanced at David, as for instruction. David was idly turning over the pages of the newspaper, as though contracts, even of this magnitude, were a mere detail in his life.

"Yes," he said, in a casual way, "I suppose a great deal does depend on Jamie and me."

"Of course," said Robert, his cheeks aglow with enthusiasm. "If we don't stand together, the chances are that we shall fail. But we mustn't fail. This is an honor to the firm, and we have to show the world that we're capable of appreciating it."

"When are you going to sign the contracts?" David asked, peeping over the top of his paper.

"I have the letter here," said Robert. "It came this morning. I have an appointment at two o'clock with the Government's representative."

"There's a time limit, of course?" said Jamie inquiringly.

"Of course," said Robert, glancing again at his letter.

"What is it?"

Robert might have read what was in his brother's mind, for a change came over him instantly.

"That has to be discussed," he said evasively, and put the letter in his pocket. Then he fell again to exulting. "Apart from the margin we may make on this contract," he said, pounding the palm of his left hand with his right fist, "there's the tremendous publicity attached—the advertisement. Wait till the trade papers come out. Won't they screech! And the fact that our tender wasn't the lowest is the grandest thing of all—it implies so much!"

"You're very excited about it, Robert," said Jamie, looking down his nose. "It wouldn't do for the representative to see you so elated. The proper thing to do is to convince him that we're not at all anxious for the contract."

"Ah! Jamie," said Robert, "I never was a hypocrite—thank God for that!—and if you think that you can convey a false impression in that way you're greatly mistaken. We are glad of the contract—at least, I am."

"Then, for your sake," said Jamie, with a mock sigh, "I hope we shall be able to put it through."

Robert frowned slightly.

"Why are you so anxious to raise doubts in that direction?" he asked.

Jamie made an expressive gesture.

"All right, Robert," he said shortly. "It's just as well that one of us should try to remain calm and collected. And, of course, I have no knowledge of the time limit. One of the newspapers sent a man down

half an hour before you arrived. He wanted to know, for the benefit of his readers."

"You keep the newspaper men out of this office," said Robert. "We're going to get all the publicity we need without their help."

"Naturally, I couldn't tell him," said Jamie, "being only a junior partner. But if he were to ask me again—if he were to suggest that the work must be completed in, say, six months, I think I know what I should be able to tell him."

"What?" asked Robert quickly.

"That it couldn't be done."

"My dear Jamie," said Robert, refusing to be piqued, "you must never show the world a tearful face. You must never raise doubts in other people's minds that you're certain of yourself. If you were to tell the newspapers that you didn't think that the firm of MacWhinnie Brothers could put this contract through, the newspapers would see to it that you didn't. What we have to do is to square our shoulders, turn up our sleeves, and get to work, asking no one's advice, thinking nothing of the possibilities of failure, never dreaming of them, but assuming from the very beginning that the work will be completed within the stipulated time."

"We have a dozen or more small contracts in hand now," said Jamie. "I hope you're not forgetting those."

"I never forget anything," said Robert. "I can't afford to forget."

"Oh, I only mentioned them, that's all!" said Jamie, in a haughty tone of voice. "There was one came in

a few weeks ago—one that will take us a considerable time to complete.”

“You mean the Johnson rotary? I remember. The contract was signed the day ‘Ballydoud’ won the Waterloo Cup—the day Mademoiselle Fricot was banqueted at the Gratz by one of her many admirers. Well, what about these smaller contracts?”

“We’ll have to complete them,” said Jamie, whose cheeks were scarlet because of the reference to the Waterloo Cup.

“We shall complete them, all right.”

“Then you intend to increase the wage-list?”

“I do not,” said Robert. “We have sufficient men here to put everything through satisfactorily.”

“I doubt it—very seriously, I doubt it.”

“You should get rid of some of your doubts, Jamie. I warrant that when the men hear of this honor that’s been paid the firm, they’ll take it in a personal sense, and they’ll put their hearts into the work. See if they don’t.”

“If I know anything about the demands of such a contract,” said Jamie sententiously, “we’ll need to take on an additional hundred hands.”

“If you’ll tell me who’s going to pay them, I’ll fall in with your argument,” said Robert.

“It’s either that, or making a mess of the contract.”

“We shall not take on a single additional hand,” said Robert, “and we’re going to win.”

“All right,” said Jamie, waving a hand, and moving toward the door. “You always were optimistic, even when you had no reason to be. Anyway, don’t blame

me if anything happens. It was my duty to point out to you——"

"Of course it was your duty," said Robert. "There's no reason to get up on your hind legs, Jamie. We are here to inquire into such problems. You've raised your points, and I'm satisfied that we can overcome the difficulties that you anticipate. There's an end of it. What do you say, David?"

"I beg your pardon?" said David, lowering his newspaper. "I wasn't listening."

Robert's face changed instantly.

"There's a couple of your clerks coming through the yard," he said, somewhat grimly. "They're half an hour late. Most certainly we shall not be able to put the contract through if we give time away like that."

David's reply was to drop the newspaper and saunter out of the office. When Robert passed through the clerical department on his way to the yard to see MacGowan, the manager, he noticed a letter lying in the post-basket and near the elbow of David's stenographer. It was addressed to Thomas MacWhinnie, Esq.

CHAPTER V

THE TOUCH OF A CHILD

ROBERT lunched with the Chilian representative. The contract was signed, and there was the promise of more, if this one should be successfully carried through. It was late in the afternoon when he returned to the works, and his two brothers had already left. The scene in the office earlier in the day had threatened to disturb his peace of mind, but as he turned the key in the lock and prepared for the journey home, he fell back on a little of his own philosophy, or, rather, the philosophy with which he had invested the fairy of his imagination. It had hurt him keenly to find that Thomas had not been so wide of the mark, after all, in his references to the two younger brothers. It hurt him, because he realized how important it was that they should stand together, believing and feeling that their interests were the same. But when one goes out to look for trouble one is seldom disappointed, and as his fairy had said, he should not concern himself too much with it, but look behind and beyond. Apart from that scene, the day had been one of triumph for him, for he was well able to appreciate the magnitude of the honor that had been paid the firm. He went home with a heart that became lighter at every step. There would be a new

story for Mori that night, and together they would weave romances for the future—even as he and someone else had woven them, years before.

And another joy awaited him. As the hall door opened, he heard a burst of childish laughter coming from the head of the stairway, and, following the outburst, a rumbling crashing, as someone slid down the stairs on a tray. Mori shrieked out: "Do it again! Do it again!" There was a mass of sprawling legs and ruffled hair at the foot of the stairs, and as it slowly extricated itself, Robert fell upon it.

"Dick!" he cried. "I knew that it could be only you who would do such a mad thing!"—and those two men began to behave like a couple of girls who had been separated for years and years. And as they couldn't very well kiss each other, they kissed Mori by turns.

"I've always said," laughed Robert, as he dragged the new arrival into the study, with Mori now upon his shoulder, "I've always said that you'd come back like this."

"Well, and how would you have me come back? . . . O Mori San, leave me just a little bit of hair—I've lost so much already."

"And you're as gray as a badger," said Robert.

"Ah, but an uncommonly active badger, Robert! I would like to see the dog that could draw me. And you? You're looking remarkably well fed. That must be O Mori San. What a housekeeper! She fattens and she spoils you, I'll be bound, while poor old Uncle Dick has had to be content with bananas, and a few nuts, and rice bound up in seaweed—that's the

tack—don't you remember it, Robert, when you first went out?"

"Dick, you're getting older!" Robert was holding him at arm's length and shaking his head in pretended sympathy. "You're getting older—and yet, I think you must have caught something of the perpetual youth of which the musumes used to talk. And I'm not so sure that you're not getting positively ugly. Where did you get that gash on the cheek?"

"Ah!" said Dick, holding up his finger, "that's a story for you, O Mori San—a story of the most wonderful fish I ever saw—and I was the bait, for the time being."

"And you're nearly bald"—laughingly.

"That's O Mori San."

"And where have you been, and when did you return, and what have you been doing in this country?"

"I've been returning for five years," said Dick, "but I couldn't raise the money to get home. My boy, if you could have seen me stoking on a tramp steamer, you'd have pitied me! I worked my passage back."

"Rubbish!" Robert laughed. "I don't believe it."

"I did. Just for the fun of the thing. We're not all millionaires, Robert—else there wouldn't be any interest in life, would there?"

"How long have you been back?"

"A fortnight, and I haven't met a single person who had the common decency to ask me if I'd like something to eat! What time do you have dinner here, Robert? We used to have it at any old time—didn't we? But now that you're a great man I suppose you're a slave to the usual conventions."

"We shall have dinner at once, old fellow. Give me a few minutes to change and to pack Mori off to bed——"

"You can stop the dinner, then, Robert, for O Mori San is not going to bed before dinner. Oh, we're great friends! She's going back with me."

"Then there'll be three of us, Dick."

"And first-class company, too. We'll be your lovers, O Mori San, and we'll fight duels just to please you. We'll do anything—won't we, Robert?"

"But what are you doing over here?" Robert urged.

"What would you have me do?—working, of course."

"Working?"

"Don't say it as though it were something new to me."

"What kind of work?"

"The usual occupation, Robert—whipping up the black sheep and stealing a little of their wool."

"Begging again?"

"Quite right, my boy. I shall be begging from you, after I've had dinner. I must get that out of you first."

"Can't be done, Dick. But you shall have the dinner, and you shall stay in this house until we let you go. What do you say, Mori?"

Mori's big eyes had taken to themselves a wondering expression, and she looked from one face to the other and asked plaintively if Uncle Dick were the beggar of the fairy story. She seemed quite disappointed that he wasn't.

At dinner, Dick Morrow was given an opportunity

to answer some of the hundreds of questions that were rushed across the table to him. During the last few years he had been in the Philippines, in Korea, Manchuria, and even as high up as the northeast corner of Siberia. He had been down with fever, and was back in England for a rest. In spite of Robert's jesting remarks about his looks, there was very little change in Dick Morrow. True, his hair was very thin; there was little color in his cheeks, and the wrinkles across his forehead, and the ruts in the eye-corners were much more pronounced; but the eyes were still full of the old fire, the old indomitable, restless spirit. He told Robert that he had been doing a little slumming by way of a holiday, and had found it to be full of interest.

"Of course," said Robert, "slumming was much more important than Mori or I, so you didn't trouble to hurry to our rescue?"

"You're quite right, Robert," said Dick, "and being a cautious man yourself, I should have thought that you'd admire that in me. I wanted to find out if Scotland stood where it did, because out yonder people were talking about MacWhinnie Brothers as though the Thames had only just commenced to live, and I wasn't certain that you'd care to recognize me. Or, put it this way, for I can see that you're getting on your toes: I fancied that my long absence from home might have made me a little uncouth. . . . What would you say, Mori, if you saw me eating with my fingers, instead of a knife and fork? It's much easier, I can assure you. You can always pick out the best bits from the common pot. Can't you see your Uncle

Dick sitting in the circle of natives, with long finger and thumb poised, just so, ready to grab when the chief says grab? . . . A nice thing, Robert, if I'd walked into your house and found you entertaining the President of Chili. . . . Oh, yes, I've heard all about it! . . . If I'd walked in and left my boots on the doorstep, or greeted your distinguished guest by rubbing noses with him, or followed one of the many customs I've had to assimilate! No, no, Robert; I went about it cautiously; and, besides, I had to commence my holiday at once when I got here. Oh, it's a great life, this slumming, Robert. I assure you that I've found less interest in some of the outposts of the Empire where everything is supposed to be picturesque and romantic. I fought three sharp rounds last night with the toughest 'pug'—that's what you call them, isn't it?—imaginable. I wished you'd been there to give me a knee, Robert. And there was another fellow with him, who might have given you a bit of exercise. I thought of you, as I swung a left to the beggar's point. I remembered how you handled the Manilla gentleman who kicked a jinrikisha boy into the creek at Tokio."

"Bruiser!" murmured Robert delightedly.

"He would have bruised me if I hadn't got in first," said Dick seriously. "He was just the kind of fellow that makes you understand why they build the prison walls so thick—a loafer—a never-work—a not-worth-whiler; he came into a little mission room where we were trying to fill forty small stomachs with the first wholesome food they had set their eyes on, and he was rude to one of the little Sisters—the one whom

you would have thought no living soul would have wronged by a look. He wanted food, he said, and he would have snatched it from the mouth of the youngest kiddy there rather than go out and work for it. I led him out, coaxed him out, and shut the door so that the noise might be kept from those inside. . . . He could hit, mark you! And he crossed me with a beautiful left before I knew what was happening. He told his friends afterward that I had no business to be a parson, and when he had fully recovered he was a different man in many respects—quite meek, and willing to try his hand at any sort of work that might happen along. He finished up by washing the dishes for us, and he begged the little Sister's pardon like a man before he went away, and offered his services as an escort whenever she should be walking through slumland of a night. . . . O Mori San, I've talked so much that I've grown hungry again."

And Mori was at his side in an instant, because she wanted him to hurry the meal in order that he might begin a story that should be her very own. They had a merry evening, those three, and when the stories were told, and the lids began to droop over the large eyes, there was the semblance of a quarrel between the two big fellows on a question of privilege—who should carry the child to bed. It ended by their both going, and as they came away from the room on tip-toe, each was glad of the darkness.

Down in the study, the two old friends smoked, and talked, and smoked, until they could barely distinguish each other through the blue haze. Jean's name wasn't mentioned once. And toward the end:

"It's done me a world of good to see you again, Dick," said Robert, in a half whisper. "We've been passing through a somewhat anxious time—the firm, I mean."

Dick nodded sympathetically.

"Money is very tight just now."

"I have good reason to know that," said Dick. "But I thought that if anyone was in a position to——"

"There you go! Everyone seems to have that idea in their heads. I blame the newspapers for it. I returned from the Far East in a whirl of romance—from log house to white palace sort of thing, with millions lying to my credit."

"You didn't work your passage back on a tramp steamer, Robert."

"I might have come back a millionaire if I hadn't been so influenced by you."

"*Now* we're going to quarrel! Where do I come in?"

"Do you remember that night at Sendai when I was fool enough to tell you about the coal, and——"

"You didn't touch it?"

"No"—regretfully—"I allowed myself to be talked out of it by you."

"Well done, Dick Morrow! You can exercise some influence, no matter what your critics may say."

"It was the chance of a lifetime," said Robert, "and I threw it away."

"And yet they tell me that in something like seven years you must have accumulated a large fortune."

"Half of it is sunk in the firm of MacWhinnie

Brothers, and if it hadn't been for this Chilian contract coming through, I should have begun to ask myself serious questions. We're terribly short of capital, and no one seems overanxious to come in."

"I'm not quick at figures, old boy, but if you put in only half——"

Robert shook his head.

"The other half is hers, Dick," he said quietly; "I wouldn't touch it—no, not if it could save the firm from disaster. It's well invested, every penny of it, and that is the one secret that I keep from—from the firm."

Dick's eyes were smoldering behind the tobacco haze.

"But why keep it secret?" he said slowly, and as though he didn't require an answer. "Your brains acquired the money—you performed wonders out yonder—and from what I hear you have behaved handsomely to the members of your family."

Robert's low laugh had in it the faintest suspicion of hysteria—behind the broad open face a thousand doubts and fears were at war with each other.

"I've done all I could in the circumstances," he said jerkily; "I might have done more if—if something hadn't happened." He stopped, at a loss for words that would rightly express his feelings and yet hide his secret from the only man in the world that he could call "friend." He rose from his chair, and paced the floor behind Dick, so that the nervous working of the facial muscles should not betray him. "Dick, old fellow," he said, in a deep whisper, "you under-

stand most things, but you can't feel the grip of a child—the grip on the heart.”

“No,” said Dick, removing his pipe from his lips and staring hard at the firebars.

Robert leaned over the back of the chair and gripped a forearm.

“I'm sorry I said that, Dick,” he said, and there was a break in his voice. “I know what you lost.”

And back again to the restless pacing.

“The child has made so much difference,” he said. “There was a time when all my hopes were centered in the family—I wanted to do so much for them, because—because when I was a kiddy, Dick, the old people had to fight hard to keep body and soul together. I've been able to do a little for them—I believe that they're comfortable—but I should like to have done more. But Mori came, and you can't imagine the hold she has upon me. She's a wonderful child, Dick.”

“Beautiful,” said Dick, and his eyes were full.

“So quaint in her ways; she's almost womanly in her childhood. Out yonder—and here—she has filled my life so completely. I may come home, tired out, and feeling that a great many things are vain, but when she curls up on my knee and we fall to telling stories, I—I . . . your pipe's gone out, Dick. Let me tell you about this contract we've secured.”

Dick half turned in his chair.

“I don't like to think that you've worried about the child, Robert,” he said gently; “is there anything that I can do?”

“I'm not worried”—doubtful'y—“but, as I was go-

ing to say, there are times when I feel what most—most fathers must feel—that when they're gone—the fathers, I mean—the child—or the children, as the case may be—will never again get the same kind of sympathy. Do you follow?"

"Perfectly."

"That's why I wish to make certain, so far as a man can make certain—that Mori shall not be handicapped by lack of means. I'm going to have her thoroughly educated—she must be sent to the Continent, although I hate to think of the day when it will be necessary to part with her—I dare say I shall be catching every second boat across the Channel; I hope to make a lady of her, and to provide for her in so liberal a way that she shall never feel any sense of handicap. . . . That's all, Dick, and I'll thank you not to interfere with my plans by urging me to give the world greater credit for kindness than is due. I know something about the world."

"No one could help loving Mori, Robert."

"I've tried to believe that, Dick, but I'm not going to take the risk. There! We'll change the subject. I want to hear all about yourself—what you've been doing, and what you're going to do in the future."

"I've told you practically everything, my dear boy. At present, I'm slumming, and enjoying it; possibly, before long, I shall be scenting the old aroma of spices and swamps, and slip down to the docks before day-break."

Robert went back to his chair.

"I wish I could persuade you to stay with me," he said wistfully, "but I know that independent spirit of

yours, and sometimes—sometimes I can feel the wanderlust that consumes you. . . . About this slumming?”

“The old, old story, Robert—I want money. I intended to touch you to-night, but you’ve headed me off.”

“I hope I shall never do that. What is it this time?”

“Breakfasts for three or four hundred kiddies.”

Robert laughed quietly.

“The same old Dick. Write Mori and me down for as much as you require.”

“On one condition: that you come along to see how well your money has been spent, and how it is appreciated.”

“Appreciation means a lot these days—we’ll come.”

“You’ll bring Mori?”

“She would love to play the hostess. Bless your heart, she would talk about it for months!”

Dick gripped the other’s hand.

“I’m a splendid beggar, Robert—eh?”

“The finest in the world.”

“And you’re a splendid giver.”

CHAPTER VI

SISTER MARGARET

I TOLD them," said Dick—he and Robert and Mori were driving through the slushy streets to the mission hall where the breakfast was to be held—"I told them the other night that you were a sort of jinni, and that probably when they were half-way through the meal you would drop through the roof, or slide through a window, bringing with you an attendant fairy. It's a pity you're getting so fat—we might have arranged a little surprise for them on those lines. Poor little beggars! They know so little of fairyland."

They were early. None of the other workers had arrived, but there was a queue of two or three hundred gutter sparrows stretching from one end of the street to the other. It was a bitterly cold morning, and most of the children had taken off their caps and shawls and were standing on them to warm their bare toes. As the cab came along, Dick was recognized, and a yell of delight swept along the ragged line.

"They've half an hour to wait, but we'll get them inside," said Dick; and when the doors of the mission house were thrown open, Robert took off his coat and helped to arrange the tables, while little Mori went among the "sparrows" with all the self-assur-

ance of Dick himself. A little Irish priest came in while the work of preparation was going on, and with a cheery "Good morning" to Dick, and a nod for the visitors, he turned up the sleeves of his cassock and helped to lay the tables. After a few minutes, two young women—Dick addressed them as Sisters—arrived at the hall, and lost no time in getting to work.

"Hurry up," Robert whispered to his friend, "these poor little beggars are simply dying to fall upon the grub. Where on earth did you find them?"

"We shan't keep them long," said Dick cheerily, and, raising his voice, called to one of the young women: "Are you nearly ready, Sister?" he inquired.

She came over to where he was at work, and her whisper, overheard by Robert, left him undecided what to do. He was trembling, and constantly glanced at the door.

"Nearly ready," said Dick . . . "here, Robert, give me a hand with this urn. I expected one or two of my pugilistic friends here this morning. They promised to act as waiters. I shall have to talk to them very sternly when they do arrive, and . . . Ah! here's the little Sister I told you about, Robert," and he rushed away to greet Margaret Drender, all snow and smiles.

Robert, white-faced and trembling, called sharply to Mori, but she was at the other end of a long table in the center of the hall, coaxing a shock-headed boy of six to "go on eating as if no one was looking." Robert was in his shirt sleeves; his hair was all awry, through lifting grubby children into their places; and

the little priest was by his side, clasping his hands and murmuring a blessing.

"Robert!" Dick cried, and he was compelled to raise his eyes to meet hers. She was stronger than he, for her embarrassment was gone. She came forward with Dick's arm through hers, and not until she was standing in front of Robert did she say to the big-hearted Morrow: "We are not strangers—Mr. MacWhinnie and I."

"Bless me!"—and Dick's arms dropped to his sides. "I thought I was going to give you as big a surprise as I hoped to give the children, for this, my old friend Robert, is the jinni I told you about."

She was wonderfully brave in those few minutes, meeting his eyes with beautiful calm—as though they were friends, but nothing more. And when she said to him, "It was very kind of you to do this for the children," her voice didn't shake in the slightest.

He made no reply. He could not trust himself to speak. He hardly dared meet her steady gaze, lest the pain of subterfuge should become so acute that, ignoring everything and everybody around them, he should cry out the words that had been fighting for expression through ten weary years.

"And so you're not strangers?" Dick was surveying them both. "Well, I'm glad to hear that; and if I were you, Sister Margaret, I should develop the friendship, because Robert, here, has a soft heart, and is always approachable when you have a scheme of this sort in hand. But, tell me, Sister, have you seen——"

And this time Robert had to turn his head away, lest he should cry out to Dick, "Don't!" But Mori came up to them at that moment, an empty dish in each hand, and a plea on her lips for the shock-headed boy, who had finished three helpings, so she said, and was equal to another, if he kept his eyes shut.

Margaret took the empty dishes from the child. It seemed to Robert that there was just a single second of hesitation—then, she drew Mori to her, and kissed her with a warmth that could not be misunderstood. Years afterward, the memory of that scene was fresh in Robert's mind, and not only the scene, but all that it conjured up. His sensitive mind could read hers. He could feel the pain that she must have felt, if only for a second. But her courage was so great that in no way, not even by a quiver of the eyelids, did she show how poignant the occasion had been.

The breakfast was finished. The little priest led the gathering in grace. And then came the parting. Robert had to return to the works. Dick was going to take Mori home. Margaret would remain behind with the other Sisters, to clear up the tables and repack the crockery. Dick accompanied his friend to the cab, and as he opened the door he said ecstatically: "I wish you knew more of her, Robert. She's one of those women who make the world all the better for their having lived in it."

And just before the cab rolled away, Robert, leaning forward, saw her standing in the doorway of the mission hall. It was as though she couldn't let him go without another look—as though she were inviting

him to say something—as though the courage and reserve and apparent indifference were weakening.

He fell back against the cushions of the cab and closed his eyes.

CHAPTER VII

THE DIVIDED HOUSE

TWO months had passed since the first of a series of breakfasts to poor children was given in the mission hall. And now the moment of crisis had come at the works. An ultimatum was to be presented, and, although in the conceiving, or, rather, the considering, of it—for the conception was Thomas's—Jamie and David had been fired with a certain amount of enthusiasm and ambition, there was a painful silence now that the task was to be entered upon.

The two younger brothers arrived early at the office that morning, and not until Thomas, gaunt and deadly earnest as usual, made his appearance were they able to address each other calmly. Neither of them had much relish for the task, although they were quite ready to see eye to eye with Thomas, especially when he had taunted them with their subordinacy. Thomas took up his position near the fireplace. Standing with hands clasped behind his back, he looked at the other two as though calculating their moral strength; then he said tentatively:

"I suppose they'll be knighting him before long. He's headed another fund with a hundred."

David pretended to open a newspaper and glance at its contents, but he dropped it impatiently, irritably,

and, looking at Thomas, said with some acerbity: "You quite understand that this has got to be done gently? I wouldn't have the old fellow upset for anything."

"You can go out, if you like," said Thomas. "Jamie and I are not fighting only your battles."

Jamie turned to him. "You're going to do the talking, Thomas, I suppose? I confess that I don't like the idea of meeting his eyes when he has the truth thrown at him."

For days and weeks Jamie had been nursing the ultimatum outlined by Thomas, rehearsing it, reasoning it, arguing with it; he had felt the justice of it, so he believed, but now, as the critical moment approached, he felt very uncomfortable. If he could have relegated the whole of the business to the more voluble Thomas—if, without loss of dignity, he could have left his younger brother to face the music with Thomas—he wouldn't have hesitated to do so.

All three started, perceptibly, as the door opened and closed. Jamie and David glanced furtively at the rebel leader. He was studiously examining the ceiling. Robert had reached the center of the room before anyone spoke. He looked from under his brows at his younger brothers, as for an explanation of Thomas's presence. Then he said to the first-born:

"It's a long while since we met, Thomas. How's all with you?"

"Thank you for inquiring," said Thomas, not unpleasantly. "I never felt better in my life. It is a long time since we met; and I don't forget that last meeting."

Again Robert looked at his younger brothers.

"Has MacGowan been in yet?" he inquired of Jamie.

"I haven't seen him," was the reply.

"Come, boy," said Robert reproachfully, "it's after his time with yesterday's report. Hasn't he had any orders for the day?"

"Not that I know of," said Jamie, a suggestion of hauteur in his voice.

"What's wrong?" asked Robert sharply. "Has this anything to do with your visit, Thomas?"

"It has," said Thomas, stirring himself. "There's going to be a change, Robert. Jamie and David have deputed me to lay the facts before you in a convincing way."

Robert hesitated only a moment. The clock on the mantel-shelf struck the hour.

"You've chosen an inconvenient time," he said tersely. "There's work to be done; when it's finished, we'll endeavor to find time to listen to you." He turned on his heel. "Jamie, I want to see MacGowan at once."

Jamie commenced to roll a cigarette.

"You'd better hear Thomas through," he said, with some show of spirit. "I've been taking orders too long."

The big, patient eyes were appealing for enlightenment, but there was strength and determination in the deep voice as he swung round on David and said:

"I want to look at those quantities your department has been getting out. You're wasting a lot of valuable time standing there."

"Wasting time and manhood," said David correc-

tively, shooting a glance of inquiry at Thomas, who was thoughtfully stroking the red beard. "Like Jamie, I'm tired of being bullied, and I've come to the conclusion that something must be done, and done quickly."

"Very well," said Robert, with wonderful calm. "I'll speak to your head clerk." He walked to the door.

"Stay," said Thomas, holding up a hand, "there's something I wish you to hear."

"It'll keep," Robert retorted; "we're very busy in these works just now, Thomas, and there's too much responsibility to leave anything to chance."

"It will not keep, Robert, so don't try to shut me up in that manner. I'm not a boy."

Robert took two strides toward the eldest brother, but it was not a threatening movement; and there was nothing harsh in his voice as he said:

"If I say it will keep, it will keep, Thomas. And I'm the senior partner in the firm of MacWhinnie Brothers. Understand that."

David was near the door; he must have fancied that Thomas was vacillating, and that here was a chance to reveal his courage. He placed his hand on the knob of the door, as though he would prevent a retreat.

"Look here, Robert," he said desperately, "we've been talking things over—Jamie, Thomas, and I."

"Talking what over?" It required a great deal of provocation to rouse Robert, but they were perilously near the achievement; his brows were lowered, his mouth was set in a firm, straight line, and if they had dared to look down at his hands they would have seen

that they were clenched—the nails were biting into the palms.

“Our position—our position in this firm,” said David waveringly.

“You have no position in this firm—at least, not a position that entitles you to dictate to me.”

Jamie leaped into the breach.

“I agree,” he exclaimed, “and it’s because we have no position that we’ve made up our minds to get out of it, unless there is some alteration.”

Robert took the blow with only a slight paling of the cheeks.

“I don’t understand you, Jamie,” he said weakly; “they’re strange words from you.”

Thomas walked to the window and drummed fitfully on the pane.

“You’ve brought this on yourself, Robert,” he said, in a sing-song voice, and throwing his words over his shoulder. “The boys are quite justified in the attitude they are taking up.”

“At your instigation, Thomas?”

“That’s as it may be. I’m the eldest of the family, and it’s only natural that they should turn to me for guidance. Don’t think for a minute that the decision has been come to without careful thought. The boys realize that they owe something to you.”

“Oh! they realize that, do they?” And Robert slowly inclined his head, as if in acknowledgment.

“Just as you owe something to them,” Thomas added.

“It seems to me,” said Robert, with a weary sigh, “that I owe something to everybody. But since you’ve

commenced, Thomas, you may go on. If work has been at a standstill for half an hour, another half won't make very much difference. What is it that David and Jamie want? What have you put into their minds?"

"I've put nothing into their minds that wasn't there already," said Thomas, affecting dignity. "To-day, I'm only their spokesman. They've come to the conclusion that you're not treating them fairly."

"And what is your own personal complaint?"

"I," said Thomas, with something like a flourish, "I never allow personal matters to overshadow the claims of the great unrepresented. The boys have been suffering in silence for a long while now; but they're only human, and you may take it from me, Robert, that their grievances have extended to the men in the yard. The day will come when you will find that they are not without a leader, one who can show them the folly of serfdom."

"Once again," said Robert, "I ask you—you, David, and you, Jamie—what is it that you really wish to put before me? I thought that we were getting along so splendidly——"

"And yet," said David, a little bitterly, "you can't have hidden from yourself the fact that we have made practically no progress during the last twelve months. There has been no attempt on your part to take advantage of the counsel that Jamie and I were in a position to give."

Robert's sense of humor overcame the anger that was seeking expression.

"Really, David," he said, "I had no idea that your

mind was so absorbed by the potentialities of the firm. Indeed, I was beginning to believe that so long as the wheels went round, you were satisfied, and I was hoping that the day would come when you'd realize more fully that you were a partner, if only a junior, in one of the most talked-of firms on the river to-day."

"And I thank you," said David superciliously, "and may I suggest that if you went into the world of men and women a little more than you do—the world which you are hinting I go into—you'd have a better appreciation of the needs of expansion. Long ago, it was put to you that if we had more capital we might improve our methods, and *deserve* the reputation you speak of."

"Have I ever said anything to suggest that so conservative were my views——"

"A little more capital," David persisted; "it would have meant so much if it had been put in at the right time."

Robert had great difficulty in keeping his patience. He felt that he ought to put down his foot with the determination of one who means to be obeyed; but he was not certain how far Thomas had eaten into the loyalty of the two younger men. In argument lay the only hope of an amicable settlement.

"But where were we to get the capital?" he asked. "I agree with you that certain improvements might have been made both in the equipment of the works and the conditions of the men who are on our pay sheet; but the first axiom you have to appreciate when you commence in any business is that relating to the

cutting of your coat according to the cloth at your disposal."

David had prepared himself for this line of argument. It was the most natural thing in the world that Robert should urge upon them that it was his money with which the firm was started; but—

"We're junior partners, Jamie and I," he said; "we're ready to admit that we didn't put anything into the firm—save brains," and he said it without a blush. "But in the beginning it was understood that if we were content to accept a salary considerably lower than that paid to some of your under-foremen—it was understood that when we arrived at a certain point there would be a general leveling up—an acknowledgment of our relative positions. What has been the result? Jamie and I are where we started. The whole of our time is given to working out estimates, and superintending a crowd of clerks. You get all the credit. You get everything. You ask me where the additional capital is to come from. According to this newspaper"—and he flung one on the table—" 'Robert MacWhinnie, Esq., so well known and honored for his charitableness, is the donor of another hundred' to a wretched soup kitchen, or something of the sort. Of course, we can't expect to expand, if the senior partner insists on withholding capital, and not only withholding it, but preventing fresh capital from coming in."

Robert's face assumed a pathetic expression as he glanced at the newspaper. Obviously, Dick Morrow was responsible for the undesirable publicity; but,

then, he had never urged that undesirability upon his old friend.

"I wish you'd be frank, and tell me what's in your minds," he said at last, holding out his right hand in a conciliatory manner. "I'm willing to do all that's possible for me to do; but I assure you there are reasons why I, personally, cannot put in any more capital. My dear boys"—and, now, it was the generous-hearted Robert again—"I would rather have parted with—I don't know what—than that this should have happened. Why didn't you come to me in the first place? Why weren't you open——?"

Thomas made a movement as though he would interrupt, and Robert turned upon him quickly.

"I'll thank you to remain quiet, Thomas," he said, and the others could see that he meant it. "You are here on sufferance—and I'm sorry to have to say that. These family quarrels are the most wretched things imaginable. I tell you, without any hesitation, that if there were no blood ties between you and me——"

"You'd order me out, I suppose?" said Thomas, with the semblance of a sneer.

"No," said Robert, "I shouldn't waste words on *ordering* you out. . . . Now, boys"—and he turned again to David and Jamie—"you must realize that you've caught me at a most inopportune time. You know as well as I do that the very existence of the firm depends on the successful carrying out of this Chilian contract."

"Which has to be completed within three months from date"—and David smiled knowingly.

"Believe me," said Robert, "the date was not kept from you or Jamie because of any distrust. It was one of those matters on which I, as the senior partner, had to make a rapid decision."

"Well, we know, so there's no more to be said about it."

"Oh, yes there is," said Robert, "because I can see, now, that you're relying—that Thomas has taught you to rely—on the knowledge you've gained—to rely on it as if it were a weapon against which I should be helpless. Well, boys, it'll be a grand victory for you. You've cornered me—let's put it like that. I, who have tried to do my very best by you all. Oh, I'm not complaining. My shoulders are broad enough, and always have been. What are the terms of the ultimatum?"

"It's not an ultimatum, Robert," said David. "If you had been more observant, you'd have seen this coming along for months and months."

"No," said Robert, "what you mean is that if I'd regarded you as a workman, instead of a brother, suspicion would have come naturally. . . . There are going to be no alterations in our methods yet awhile. There! I have given you an answer. What have you got to say to it?"

"We had already made up our minds to that answer. We're going to leave you——"

"In the lurch."

"You're too sentimental, Robert. I may tell you that Jamie and I are men of the world, and quite equal to that subterfuge."

"I can fill your places within twenty-four hours,"

said Robert, and, now, sternness had taken the place of conciliation. "What have you to say to that?"

"It doesn't interest me in the slightest," David replied. ". . . There will be some sort of a settlement—you won't oppose that, of course? Under the terms of our agreements—and we have to thank Thomas for the precaution that brought those agreements into existence—we are entitled to a proportionate valuation."

"I can give you the figures now," said Robert, without hesitation. "According to the agreements, you are entitled to about six thousand each, and those amounts are based on the profits that have accrued under contracts completed during the last two years. I'll see my solicitors to-night. Since you are intent on driving a bargain, I'll fall in with you; but it shall be a hard one. There's no need to stay in the yard one minute longer than you desire. That's finished the sorry business. Now, let me, as a brother, ask you, what do you intend to do in the future?"

"Look here, Robert," said Jamie falteringly, and as though he were ashamed of the part that he had played in the proceedings, "when this subject was put up to me, I laid it down that we shouldn't overlook what you have done for the family——"

"That's all right, Jamie," said Robert. "It's settled, now. There's no need to reopen it. As I said just now, I'm only sorry that you didn't take me more fully into your confidence. But I'm used to shocks. Sometimes I think I've borne so many that I've become impervious to them. I wish you well, Jamie. But what are you going to do?"

They told him, in a hesitant manner, that having been promised a certain amount of support, financial and otherwise, they intended to go to the Clyde, there to open a small yard of their own. They went so far as to hint at the amount of capital they expected, and he offered no criticism, although he could foresee the end. In truth, they were to be but the representatives of a syndicate, to be registered as the Scottish Pinion Company. And when the story was told they broke into lighter spirits, believing that already they had repaired the broken road. Jamie said, with some degree of unctuousness:

"I'm glad that you agree with us, Robert, that ambition cannot be held in check. I'm glad that you are not disposed to place any difficulties in our way. If I had thought that we were to part bad friends, I shouldn't have had anything to do with this. It will be some time before the changes take place, and you may rest assured that we shall do our very best to see that you're not let down——"

Robert stopped him by holding out a hand as in farewell.

"Thank you, Jamie," he said curtly, yet not without pleasantness, "but the needs of this firm are such that no time must be allowed to elapse before the changes take place. I will wish you good morning, and the best of luck; and you, David"—he held out his hand to the younger brother.

For a moment, they were riveted to their places by stupefaction. Then David said:

"You're not serious, Robert?"

"There's work to be done," said Robert briskly,

"and I have no time to be other than serious. . . . And good-by to you, Thomas."

Thomas urged the younger brothers to the door, whispering to them as he went. He looked around just before leaving the room.

"As a brother, Robert," he said—Robert had turned his back, and one elbow was resting on the mantel-shelf—"as a brother, Robert, it's my duty to warn you that each succeeding day brings more enlightenment to the minds of the workers. There *is* work to be done, and it must be done quickly, if you set any store by loyalty."

The door closed. For a long while Robert remained standing near the fireplace, his face turned to the window. He fought a great fight with himself in that time; and when he felt brave enough to look another man in the face, he rang for a messenger.

"Ask Mr. MacGowan if he will be kind enough to come here at once," he said.

And when MacGowan appeared, tall, grimy, dour, Robert, without turning round, said to him:

"There are going to be some changes here, MacGowan. Mr. James and Mr. David are leaving us, to take over a new concern. . . . How's the work going?"

"First-rate, sir," said MacGowan. "We shall be through before the end of three months."

"And how are the men—their feelings, I mean?"

MacGowan stroked his chin.

"I was going to speak to ye about that, sir," he said. "And if ye'll pardon me mentioning it, the

men wad be a' the better if they saw less o' Mr. Thomas——"

"I asked you a straightforward question, MacGowan," said Robert quickly, "and I don't pardon your taking liberties of any sort."

"I was on'y going to say, sir, that Mr. Thomas has the run of the yard——"

"Mr. Thomas has every right to enter the yard or the shops, if I say so, MacGowan."

"Ah, weel!" sighed MacGowan, and braced himself for further orders.

"You say the work should be through before the end of three months?"

"If we progress at the same rate. Ye can never depend on the humor o' the men."

"We're going to depend on it, MacGowan, and this contract must be through within three months from now. Do you understand that?"

"I can on'y answer for myself, sir. I want no better master."

"Then, return to the yard, MacGowan, and let it go forth that if this contract is completed by the time I have mentioned, two and a half per cent. of the profits will be distributed as a bonus among the men. If we can't have loyalty for nothing, we'll pay for it."

CHAPTER VIII

AT "JARROWSIDE"

EVERYTHING was done with dispatch; the dissolution of partnership was accomplished much more speedily than the younger brothers had imagined would be the case. Thomas had prepared them for arguments and reproaches which even he believed to be natural in the circumstances; but Robert accepted the situation with calmness, resignation, and a smile of encouragement that left them doubting that they had come out of the battle victorious. There wasn't the slightest trace of acrimony in his demeanor when, the lawyers having set their seal upon the new arrangement, he bade them good-by and good luck; indeed, he said he almost wished they had come to some such decision earlier, so that he might have been able to give them a substantial start in the new enterprise. He begged them earnestly to apply themselves to the demands of the company on the Clyde, assuring them, in a gentle, generous way, that only by personal endeavor could they hope to achieve success; they must not place too much reliance on the capabilities of whatever manager they might engage; always, they should be able to place their finger on a weak spot in their organization without having to await a report from manager or foreman. He reminded them of

their youth—they must not lose heart if success were coy during the first year. And if they were ever in need of his advice, they had only to write to him.

He did not speak to Thomas, although the elder brother kept close to the young men during the last day. And the final words he addressed to David before taking leave of him were:

"This firm will continue as 'MacWhinnie Brothers.' I shall miss you two, sorely, so don't forget to write."

The next few weeks would have been very lonely for him had it not been for Mori. He did not deem it necessary to acquaint her with what had happened—in fact, he allowed her to go on talking about Uncle David and Uncle Jamie as though they were still at the works—but the child seemed to divine that something had happened, or, perhaps, in his loneliness, he derived greater joy from her sympathy.

New appointments were made at the works without any loss of time, and the passing of the junior partners made no appreciable difference in the conduct of business. The little father, learning of the dissolution, wrote to express his and Mrs. MacWhinnie's gratitude for the fresh start he was giving his younger brothers. It was easy to read between the lines of that letter—the young men had led the father to believe that they had merely left the Thames in order to manage a new concern in which Robert was interested. Mr. Donald MacWhinnie added in a postscript that he had not yet succeeded in "running the dairy farm money to earth," but he was hot on the scent, and Robert might expect to hear from him any day.

Dick Morrow was in the north of Ireland during

the few weeks immediately following the departure of the brothers, and the first intimation that Robert received of his return was a telephone message from the riverside house. He had taken the liberty of lunching with O Mori San in the absence of her father, he said, and if the father had no objection he was going to take O Mori San out to tea that afternoon. They would be back before dinner. He did not say that he was invited to Mr. John Drender's house, but he left a note for Robert should he arrive home before their return.

That afternoon at "Jarrowside" was a memorable one for the child; frequently, she had inquired of Dick why they never visited the lady who was so sweet to her at the slum breakfast, and he had made her many promises. On this afternoon, he had occasion to consult Margaret Drender on one of her many charitable interests, and Mori had pleaded so hard that he had agreed to telephone to Robert for permission to take her out. "You see, we're bound to ask daddy," he told her gravely, "else he might come back to an empty house and imagine that someone had run off with you." And she had tickled his chin with the petals of a flower, asking the while: "Who would run off with me, silly uncle?" "I would," he had told her, and he said it very seriously.

Margaret Drender was in the garden when they reached "Jarrowside." The moment they passed through the gateway, Mori left Dick's side and raced across the lawn. When he came up, Margaret's right arm was around the child's neck, and her own cheeks were flushed as with joy.

"I've stolen her—stolen her for the afternoon," said Dick, wagging a finger at Mori, "but we've given our bond that we shall be home before dinner. . . . O Mori San, my fate is in your hands."

And O Mori San, tightening her hold of Margaret's arm, said, with a shake of her curls: "Daddy will know where we are, so why be nervous?"

Mr. John Drender, grim as the iron on which he lived, was in the study, nursing a crushed toe. Margaret introduced Dick; Mori introduced herself: "My name's Mori—it means a forest. What's yours?"

The old man gave Dick a careful look over, as he himself would have put it. Then, pointing to the bandaged foot: "That's through not relying on your men—thinking they couldn't set a plate without your help. Not in your line. Eh?"

"No," said Dick, with a laugh; he expected the usual criticism of his calling.

Mr. Drender made an ear trumpet of his left hand, then asked, with brows lowered:

"Do you smoke?"

"Like a chimney," said Dick.

"Fill up," said the old man. "I like you. Thought you were one of the other sort."

Margaret slipped an arm around Mori's neck, and they went out of the study to superintend the making of tea. Dick lit his pipe and commenced to read John Drender's face; John Drender had read his already.

"Been through the works yet?"

Dick shook his head.

"Not interested—eh?"

"On the contrary——"

"Too noisy—too much hammering and shouting?"

"I enjoy anything that has a 'punch.' "

"Punch?"

"Go—action—movement."

"So do I. Take me out of those works, and I'm duller than an undertaker's mute."

"I'm aware of that."

"How?"

"You keep tapping the arm rest with the bowl of your pipe, and there's a sort of rhythm about the tapping. . . . Drender and Masters are known all over the world."

The iron-gray head bowed an acknowledgment.

"We've turned out some fine engineers," said the old man proudly. "Ye should meet my partner, Jim Masters. He's not one of the praying sort—you know what I mean?—but Jim has done things—he's made things—he hasn't buried his talent, as you would say."

"I'm a personal friend of Mr. Robert MacWhinnie."

The old man said "Oh!" and kept his wrinkled face set in a frown for fully thirty seconds. Then, resuming the tapping on the arm rest of the chair, he said thoughtfully: "Ye'll not find many better engineers than Robert MacWhinnie."

Dick accepted the tribute as though it were a personal one.

"I'm not going to look for a better," he said, with conviction.

"He made his start with Drender and Masters."

"He himself told me—and with pride."

"He did well abroad. I always said he would."

"He's going to make a name for himself at home."

Mr. Drender made a clicking noise in his throat.

"Ay—if his family will let him," he said. "Do ye know the family, Mr. Morrow?"

"Slightly," said Dick.

"Well, that's as much as ye'll need to know them. . . . I'm sorry for the lad."

"Sorry, Mr. Drender?"

"Ay, sorry. Reminds me of a man I once saw trying to swim across the Tyne with a couple of weights tied round his neck. . . . There's never more than one clever lad in a family, and his cleverness becomes a curse if he's afflicted with sentiment. . . . You know that his brothers have left him?"

Dick pursed his lips.

"I've been out of the country for some time," he explained.

The old man gave the arm rest a vicious tap.

"Left him—and a good thing for him, I should say. Couple of empty-headed asses! But they'll come back—you mark my words."

Dick would have questioned him, but the old iron-master changed the subject with characteristic abruptness. Margaret had told her father a great deal about Morrow, about his travels and adventures; he wanted to hear more, for—

"It was as much as I could do a year or so back to keep my daughter from going out as a missionary."

"She is very earnest in her work," said Dick admiringly; "she would be a splendid acquisition to the ranks of the brave women scattered throughout the East."

"She's all I have, Mr. Morrow," said the old man, dropping his voice, "and I suppose it's natural, in the circumstances, for me to be a little selfish. I don't know what I should have done without her all these years."

Dick nodded understandingly, and glanced through the window to where Margaret and the child were wandering hand in hand in the shrubbery.

"Don't know what I should have done without her," Mr. Drender repeated, half to himself, as he followed Dick's eyes. . . . "Mebbe I'm selfish."

Tea was laid in the study, and Mori crept right into John Drender's heart by carrying his cup to him in the mincing, shuffling manner of a musume. She was a delightful mimic, and the louder the old ironmaster laughed the more emphatic and expressive were her gestures. And, tea over, he insisted on her sitting at his feet and going through the pantomime again.

Margaret and Dick went into the grounds, where they talked of the work in which they, both of them, were interested. Again and again the name of Robert MacWhinnie passed his lips, until, at last, she looked up at him, and said almost in a criticizing voice: "You are a very close friend of Mr. MacWhinnie?"

Dick started slightly, and replied:

"Of course. . . . I am always mentioning his name?"

"Say 'frequently,' " and she smiled as to add: "I wonder why?"

Dick lowered his eyes. "Robert MacWhinnie is very close to my heart, Miss Drender. I am one of those

men who make few friends in life, being so nomadic, so—so erratic."

She looked at him, almost shyly.

"Hardly erratic, Mr. Morrow. I should have said that you were a man who would never be without a friend."

"Perhaps I'm too exacting. A man must possess so many qualities to satisfy my demands; he must make up for my own shortcomings."

"And Mr. MacWhinnie possesses all those qualities?" She was half amused, half grave.

"He possesses them all save one," said Dick, with a great deal of earnestness, and as though she were challenging him to defend the honor of his old friend; "all save one. . . . He's too unselfish, he takes too serious a view of life, and of what is meant by the word 'duty.'"

She sighed, and her cheeks reddened because of that sigh; there was still a smile in her eyes as she said:

"How splendidly you champion a friend!"

"How splendid a friend to champion!" he answered quietly. "I met Robert MacWhinnie during his first month in Japan, and I was still there when he came out with his sister."

The big dark eyes filled as she murmured:

"Poor Jean!"

"You knew her well, Miss Drender?"

"Yes"—very softly.

"She died in my arms"—his voice trembled.

Margaret placed her hand on his arm.

"I didn't know that," she said, pausing in the path to look into his face.

"And sometimes I feel that my heart died with her, and . . . You're the first woman to whom I have spoken about her." His eyes were bright, and the lines of his rugged face seemed to soften.

"Poor Jean!" she whispered again; adding, almost inaudibly, "and poor you!"

He shook himself, and infused a more determined note into his voice.

"Poor me?" he laughed softly. "No, no; I am rich—in memories—and they count for a lot in a life like mine. . . . Do you understand, now, why Robert and I dwell so closely together in friendship?"

"He loved his sister," Margaret said, and lowered her eyes.

"There's something else. It's because I feel that behind his quiet resignation there is a tragedy similar to my own, that I look upon him—well, as a brother."

She turned her head to listen to the burst of laughter coming from the direction of the study.

"Mori in her most piquant mood," Dick guessed. "If I could think ill of Robert for just one hour, I should run away with Mori."

Margaret was all smiles as she inclined her ear toward the house.

"It's a long while since I heard father laugh like that," she told him.

"Mori has driven the tears out of my heart many a time."

"Let us go in," she urged; "we cannot afford to lose bright moments."

Dick followed her to the door; they had to pass the study window, and it was natural to glance in. John

Drender was lying back in his chair and laughing while the tears rolled down his cheeks. Mori, in the center of the room, was playing a mythical samisen, and screeching after the manner of a geisha in song.

Long after Dick and the child were gone from "Jarrowside," old Drender sat in the study nodding to his laughing thoughts. Margaret came in to read to him. He looked up, placed his hand to his ear, and asked:

"Whose bairn is yon, Margaret?"

"Robert MacWhinnie's, father," she said, and her lips quivered.

A shadow came to his face, but only for a fleeting second. Then he held out his hand toward her.

"We'll have the reading, my bonnie lass," he said. And as she came closer, he reached up and gently stroked her hair. He said no word, but there was that in his tender touch that murmured:

"And you're mine—you're mine."

CHAPTER IX

THE WEAKER SEX

MORI fell ill, at a time when the governess was away on a visit to her parents and the old housekeeper was confined to her room with a pain which she could not locate. Robert returned from the works to find the child huddled up on the couch in the study; she was hot and feverish, and there was considerable sickness; the eyes were puffed, the cheeks flushed, and as he fell on his knees beside the couch she allowed her head to loll toward him. His cry of "Mori, darling, what ails you?" frightened rather than soothed her; for the fear in his eyes was strange to her. He looked about him, and never had his sense of loneliness been so acute. Lonely and helpless! He rang for the servants, ran to the door and called anxiously, angrily. They came at his bidding, and were as helpless as he. How long had Miss Mori been ill? They didn't know. How long had she been on the couch? They couldn't tell him; they had not missed her—she seldom went into the servants' quarters.

"The doctor—quickly!" he said sharply. "See that her room is ready; I'll take her upstairs immediately."

Is there anything so pathetic as a lonely man with a sick child in his arms? All that day Robert had toiled

as hard as any laborer in his works, and toward the end only the thought of the waiting child had prevented his sinking down on an office chair and sleeping. Fear easily masters the bodily weak man. As he carried the child to her room, a thousand phantoms seemed to crowd around him, their hands outstretched to snatch her from his grasp. The maid who followed him into the room shrank from him as he turned upon her to ask why she was standing there like a block of wood.

"Undress the child—and do it gently." And he rushed down the stairs to make certain that someone had gone for the doctor. Then back again to the sick room. Mori was moaning and wetting her dry lips with her tongue. Roughly he thrust the frightened maid aside, and with a moistened sponge brushed the curls from the child's forehead, the while he called to her, gently, pleadingly.

He heard the hall door open, and with a cry of relief ran to the landing and called out urgently:

"Hurry, doctor; for the love of Heaven, hurry!"

It was Dick Morrow, and he came up the stairs three at a time. Robert turned on him fiercely.

"I thought you were the doctor, Dick. Get away, man, and fetch one—make him come—carry him—don't waste a second. Mori's ill."

A maid called up the stairs. The doctor was on his way to the house.

"Mori ill!" Dick pushed him aside and went into the room to the child. His fear was as great as Robert's. He leaned over the bed, and his fingers shook like reeds in the wind as he touched her hair.

"Do something, Dick," Robert whispered. "Don't let her lie there in pain."

"What can I do, old fellow?" Dick threw out his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "Who's been with her all day? What has she been eating? Don't you know? Haven't you inquired of the servants?"

Robert took a deep breath.

"My dear Dick," he burst out, "why stand there asking questions? I've only just returned from the works. I found her lying on the couch, all crumpled up, Dick, like a crushed flower, and no one near her—no one taking the least interest in her. Can't you do anything? I thought you knew something about ailments."

Dick clenched his hands.

"My dear Robert, don't be a fool! What can I do? I'm—I'm as big a fool as you are where children are concerned. . . . My little sweetheart!" He was bending over the bed again, but all that he could do to relieve her was to brush back the damp curls from a damper brow.

They, both of them, were helpless. They were near to anger with each other, and when they heard the rattling of the wheels on the drive they cried, together, "Thank God!" and hurried down the stairs. The doctor went back with them, looking from one to the other as though he were in doubt which to address. They leaned over his shoulder as he stooped to touch the sick child, and they waited with lips parted for the result of his examination.

"Is there a woman in the house?" he inquired, at last. "If not, telephone for a nurse."

Robert caught at his arm. The doctor shook his head warningly.

"You had better go downstairs," he said. "I will come to you presently, when the nurse arrives."

In the study Robert found Dick, who had preceded him from the sick room. He closed the door and went over to the couch.

"She was lying there—just there, when I came in," he said, biting at his lips to keep back the sobs.

Dick's wretchedness of mind was to be seen in his eyes. He nodded mechanically.

Robert sat down on the couch and stared at the carpet. With a little laugh of bitterness he muttered:

"Presentiments, presentiments—all day long presentiments. Dick, this would be the last blow that I could stand."

"Steady yourself, Robert," said Dick feebly; "it may be nothing serious."

"I think I could stand anything save that. I mean it, Dick. I'm sorry if I spoke roughly to you upstairs. You can understand my feelings?"

"Quite," said Dick, without appearing to have heard.

"It hurt me, stabbed me, to think that we two could do nothing to help her while she was lying there. You heard her moan, Dick? That was the first time I heard a child moan, and I never want to hear it again."

"It may be nothing."

"And the strange part about it is that all these years I've never even thought of the contingency; she's always been so strong, so vigorous, so full of life——"

"May be nothing at all."

"So full of energy that I've never associated her with illness. . . . Dick—Dick, it'll break my faith. . . . What do you mean by 'nothing at all'? How can you stand there, man, and talk such arrant nonsense, and—— Forgive me, Dick. My head's all anyhow." He covered his face with his hands; the muscles of his arms were taut. "We've had a tiring day in the works, old fellow. Everything seemed to go wrong—just as though the inanimate things knew that something was going to happen. You heard what the doctor said? 'Isn't there a woman in the house?' Oh, Dick, if anything should happen to my Mori, there'd be nothing left. . . . Everything seemed to go wrong; the machinery *knew*, and—— Ring the bell gently, old boy, and inquire if that nurse has arrived. Where the *devil* has she got to?"

"Robert, have patience."

"I am patient. . . . Can you hear anything upstairs? Dick, I'm all of a tremble. . . . 'Isn't there a woman in the house?' Say, Dick, it's terrible when there isn't a woman in the—in a case like this. Eh?"

"Terrible," Dick agreed.

"Everything seems to go dead wrong, doesn't it?"

"Everything."

"I wish you knew how I felt when we couldn't do anything up there."

"I knew."

Robert started to his feet. There was a step on the stair. The doctor pushed open the study door. Both Robert and Dick held out their hands imploringly.

"The nurse is with her," said the doctor cheerily.

He looked at Robert. "You are Mr. MacWhinnie, I believe? Keep the child warm; but the nurse will see to that, in any case; leave everything to her—she knows her work."

He buttoned his coat collar and held out his hand to Robert.

"Measles," he said abruptly.

CHAPTER X

THE STRENGTH OF PRIDE

THE child had reached that stage of convalescence when fretfulness takes the place of mute appeal. She was restless and impatient, and he must always be near the bedside when she awoke, and be ready to amuse her with new stories, and to tell her of all that was going on in the house and at the works. No parent was ever more solicitous than Robert MacWhinnie. His patience was inexhaustible, and even when her eyes remained open till long after midnight, he never seemed to tire, no matter how arduous had been the exertions of the day.

And then came the menace which he had never even considered possible. The portent to which the socialistic Thomas had endeavored to direct his attention arose at a time when he was actually feeling the exhilaration of a triumph that seemed assured. The Chilian contract was nearly completed, and in the stories to the child he had outlined a holiday which he intended to take with her. For some days he had been in the habit of leaving the works half an hour before work ceased, in order that he might sit with Mori as long as possible before dinner. Those who were directly responsible for the rude awakening of Robert MacWhinnie could not have timed their actions more

cruelly. Before leaving the office that afternoon, Robert had sent for his manager, MacGowan, and intimated that while he was satisfied they could finish well within the contract time, he wished to be on the safe side, and gave instructions for a number of the men to work overtime.

"They will be well paid for it," he had said; "but not for a moment do I believe that the promise will weigh with them. I am content to rely on their loyalty. Indeed, I feel that the majority of them are as anxious as I am for the good reputation of the firm."

Mori had been more than usually fretful that day, and when Robert reached home he found her crying; as tears had never been associated with a disposition that was very like his own, he was thrown into great alarm. Her imagination had been running riot, and the nurse had become impatient, and rebuked her. She didn't want to listen to Mori's stories of fairy archipelagoes and lands where the sun went to bed so quickly that one never saw it undress; she wanted Mori to try to sleep, and she was very angry with the father who filled the child's head with such nonsense.

But within five minutes the child was happy. He had lifted her out of bed, wrapped a blanket around her shoulders, and was sitting with her near the window from which they could see the river craft. *He* believed in all her fairy people; he was certain that at one time or another he must have been there among them; and, best of all, he had made up his mind that when she was strong again they would set out to find these places. She went to sleep in his arms, and he placed her back in the bed, lying down by her side for

some time, lest she should awaken suddenly and be afraid because he wasn't there.

When at last he left the room he was so tired that he could scarcely keep his eyes open. He did not wish for dinner. He felt that he hadn't the strength to change. He went to the study, and touched the bell before flinging himself down on the couch. He told the maid that he would do without dinner, or, at least, rest for an hour before having it. And he had hardly closed his eyes when the girl returned. MacGowan, the manager of the works, wished to see Mr. MacWhinnie at once.

"Show him in," said Robert, without rising.

He overheard MacGowan saying to someone in the hall: "No, I must see him first. Dinna mind me, lassie." Then the door was thrown open, and the angular Scot stumbled in. He was still in his overalls, and there was blood on his face.

"Man, it's come!" he burst out.

Robert sprang from the couch with a wild exclamation, and thrust MacGowan into a chair.

"What's come? What's this blood on your face? What has happened?"

"Everything's happened," said MacGowan dolefully. "I've been fearin' it this mony a day, but I listened to ye, sir. Ye were always so ready to gi'e them credit for loyalty."

"You're talking about the men?" Robert's face had gone suddenly pale. "What has happened, MacGowan?"

"It was the overtime notice that seemed to do it."

"Do what, man? Why don't you speak out?"

"They've gone on strike, sir." And MacGowan gave two nods as in emphasis.

Robert was too dazed for a moment to do more than stare at the man in the chair. Then he cried out in a peculiar, unnatural voice:

"You're mad, MacGowan! You must be mad!" And, as MacGowan didn't speak: "I don't believe you, MacGowan. You're doing this to annoy me. You've been talking to somebody, and you have some grievance."

MacGowan wiped his brow with the back of his oily hand.

"That's no like ye, Mr. MacWhinnie," he said reproachfully. "I've sarved ye weel."

"But do you know what you're saying?" Robert's face was pitiable, and his fingers were working as though he would take MacGowan by the shoulders and shake a coherent story from him.

"I'm telling ye the truth, Mr. MacWhinnie. It happened soon after you left this afternoon, but they've been brooding a long while. Didna I say to ye that brother of yours——"

"Hold your tongue, MacGowan!" said Robert sharply; but in that minute he felt the pain of a knife-stab. Was it possible that his own brother had done this thing? He had never regarded Thomas's leanings as other than harmless. He had never for a moment imagined that he would allow those leanings to prejudice his own flesh and blood. The whole idea was preposterous.

"Half an hour after ye'd gone," MacGowan went on, "a dozen o' them cam' into the office to see ye.

They'd torn down the notice about overtime, and they flung it in my face when I opened the door. They were not going to be dictated to, they said. Ye'd cajoled them into working like slaves for the last month or two, and they were not certain that you meant to do what was right by them. They were in a position to dictate. That's how they talked, sir."

"Dictate! But what do they wish to dictate?"

"They had set out their demands. They thrust it into my hand—that paper!—and asked for ye. They wouldna believe that ye'd gone. Two o' them tried to get past me into the office—two o' the young uns, who were out for devilment. They wanted nae mair than a spark to set them on fire, and—and, man, they got it! I've worked too lang as an engineer; I've helped too many bairns to climb into manhood and to larn their trade, to stand that sort o' thing. 'Ye're lyin' to us, MacGowan,' one said; an' I felled him as he spoke."

"MacGowan, you shouldn't have done that."

"You'd hae done the same y'rself, sir. They had nae respect for my gray hair, but they had some for my fist. Look at their terms."

"Of course, they're impossible."

"They demand a percentage on accountants' figures."

Robert was reading what the leaders of the men had written.

"They can't be serious," he said.

"They're serious eno'," said MacGowan, "because they know we've on'y four days left."

"Four days in which to complete the contract. Yes,

MacGowan, and they know something else. They know that I'm a small man, and that this is the hardest fight that we've had to put up thus far. How can we temporize with them?"

"Ye'll no do that, sir. They're too cunning. They're aware that the advantages are a' on their side. I could see it in their faces; they had been waiting for this moment."

"But, MacGowan, they were so peaceful. Everything was in such perfect order when I left this afternoon. This is like a nightmare."

"They deceived ye, but they didna quite deceive me," said MacGowan. "They went about it quietly, and if I hadna been a suspicious man, they'd hae taken me in badly."

"What are they doing now?"

"They're outside the gates. Work's stopped. They guess that I've come to see ye. I wish ye'd taken my advice, sir, when I hinted that the room of certain persons who cam' to the yard was mair desirable than their company."

"Hold your tongue," said Robert again, "if it's Mr. Thomas MacWhinnie to whom you're referring."

"I'll grant ye, sir, that he hasna been near the works since the day the young maisters left; but he dropped the seed behind him, and it grows awf'y quick. An' if it's no him, I can put my hand on the other body. Do you ken, sir, that Drender and Masters hae no been havin' a vera flush time lately?"

"What do you mean?"

"They havena had mony contracts in. Work's been a little slack."

"I know nothing about it."

"An' I shouldna wonder if they've never got over the slight that was put on them when we got this contract."

Robert thrust aside his own interests, fears, and anxieties in that minute.

"MacGowan," he said sternly, "when you speak of Drender and Masters, you will please me and do credit to yourself as an engineer—you will pay a tribute to your judgment—by remembering that if our firm has one consuming ambition, it is to achieve the reputation of Drender and Masters. Now we'll go down to the works. There's no time to be lost. These men must be brought to realize that, although the advantages of the moment are on their side, we're not going to throw down our weapons and surrender tamely."

He left the manager in the study for a moment, and went out to give instructions to the nurse that Mori was to be kept quiet and in ignorance of the fact that he was out.

When he and MacGowan arrived at the works, they found a hundred or so of the men gathered about the gates. The youths raised an ironical cheer as Robert leaped from the cab, followed by MacGowan. The older men kept in the background, seemingly content to leave the excitement of the hour to the others. The gates of the works were wide open. Robert forced his way through the press till he reached the entrance; then he turned and faced the malcontents. MacGowan was on his right hand, his angular features set in defiance. Someone on the fringe of the crowd shouted:

"What's your answer, Robert MacWhinnie? We're waiting for it, and we want 'Yes' or 'No.'"

MacGowan raised a grimy fist, and shook it menacingly in the direction of the voice, but Robert turned upon him angrily.

"We'll pay you for that, MacGowan!" shouted some of the youths.

One of the older men called out, in a semi-apologetic tone: "It's the principle we're fighting, not Robert MacWhinnie." A cheer followed, and when it had died down Robert raised his hand for silence.

"If you had any principles," he said, and he was unable to conceal his bitterness, "you have forfeited them; for when did I refuse to listen to any grievances you might have had to lay before me? Have I ever treated you as other than men?"

"The principle!" they shouted again, but there was a tinge of shame in their voices.

"Only a short while ago I made what I believed to be a generous offer."

"It was the time to make offers, Mr. MacWhinnie," a thick-set engineer shouted back. "You had everything to gain, and we were not in a position——"

"To thank me for it," Robert helped him out.

"You were getting value for your money."

"And this," said Robert, pointing back at the empty yard, "this is the value. Where are your leaders?"

A dozen names were shouted in chorus, but no one moved forward.

"You have our terms," said someone in the crowd; "this matter can be easily adjusted if you like to exercise the spirit of fair play."

"The terms set out on this paper," said Robert, "are preposterous," and with that he tore the paper in halves and flung the pieces in the direction of the crowd. "There's my answer," he said, and then waved his hand toward the works. "The gates are open. Finish your work, and then I may be disposed to discuss any proposals you have to make."

They laughed in his face.

"We're not fools, Robert MacWhinnie," an old man cried. "If we give way now, what chance have we of getting redress when the contract's finished."

"Point to a single instance of redress having been denied you."

"You'll have to give way," said the man, making no attempt to reply to the question. "You have only four days left."

"You chose your time well," said Robert. "It does great credit to your sense of loyalty. I'll show you how I appreciate it. MacGowan, stand by that gate." He turned back to the men. "The gates are open now," he said, "and my offer stands. Go back to your shops, and when the work is through I'll receive any deputation you care to send to me, and endeavor to meet all your demands. Refuse to go in, and I close the gates. The majority of you are union men, but I doubt if you have the support of your union in this matter, for no union worthy the name condones what is little removed from sheer treachery. After those gates are closed, I shall refuse to listen to anyone here. I shall discuss the trouble only with representatives from headquarters. Now, what is your answer?"

Again he was rewarded with a taunting laugh.

"Close the gates, MacGowan." He stepped back, and the gates swung together. It was strength of character, yet even MacGowan, rude and unpolished, shook his head in disapproval.

"Man, they'll wreck the works!" he said, as he watched Robert shoot home the bolts that held the gate.

"Go into the office quickly," said Robert, "and telephone to the police."

"I did that before I cam' to see ye, sir," said MacGowan. "They will be here shortly."

"That's all right," said Robert calmly. "The men may do whatever their treachery dictates, but at the first sign of attack on those gates, MacGowan, they will learn what it is to defy a desperate man."

They were hurrying toward the office. From beyond the gates came shouts and howls of derision.

"Loyalty!" muttered Robert. "That's loyalty, MacGowan, when you're compelled to buy it. If I were in a position to do it, I'd keep those gates locked until they were brought to their knees by hunger. It's this kind of thing that adds bricks to the wall between capital and labor, in spite of all the attempts to break down that wall. Four days, working at top speed!"

He went into the office, and MacGowan could see that the great heart was wavering. Robert sat down at the table, resting his elbows upon it and staring vacantly in front of him. The gate was fifty yards from the office. The men outside had taken to singing, but Robert did not hear them.

"After the singing, the stones," MacGowan muttered. "I know them. I've been through this before."

Robert turned to him.

"I don't want to keep you here, MacGowan," he said, "if you'd feel safer at home. It would be quite easy for you to leave the works by way of the river."

"Ay," said MacGowan, and there was a frown on his rugged face.

"Quite easy," said Robert. "I'll go down with you, if you wish."

"Ay," said MacGowan again. "Mebbe you'd like me to go out there an' tell them that Sandy MacGowan was just as big a reprobate as theirsels. It would be much easier for me to go amang them wi' a crowbar."

"You're a Scot, MacGowan," said Robert, smiling gratefully, "and there's a lot in that. . . . You think I was right in my assumption that their union knows nothing of this?"

"I'm certain of it, sir. I tell you that I could put my finger on the right spot."

Robert shook his head.

"They know their strength. Four days! But even if I dared concede their terms, they would take it in the wrong spirit. They would laugh at me—laugh at my helplessness. MacGowan, there seems to be no other way out of it."

A volley of stones rattled against the gates.

"On'y the youngsters," said MacGowan soothingly. "They'll soon get tired of that, and they're mighty good gates. I'll mak' some of the beggars put the paint back when they've come to their senses."

"We can't afford to lose an hour." Robert was biting his lips in desperation.

The clamour outside died suddenly away.

MacGowan went quickly to the door of the office. The bell hanging from the gatepost was rung loudly.

"They're coming to their senses sooner than I thought," and MacGowan rolled up his sleeves. "They've sung their song. I'll be singin' mine in a few minutes."

"Will you go and see what they want?" said Robert. "I shall receive only their acknowledged leaders, and you may as well inform them that there will be no compromise. The terms which they set out are still preposterous."

He heard MacGowan running swiftly across the yard. He heard the withdrawing of the bolts. He heard the gates clang together again. Then came the sound of footsteps returning to the office. He was still seated at the table, his back to the door; he was trying to plan some answer that would neither compromise him nor prejudice the situation. The door behind him opened. "Sir," said MacGowan meaningly. Robert looked around. Thomas, the elder brother, was standing on the threshold; there was a faint sneer on his thin lips and an expression of "I told you so—I warned you" in his eyes.

"Close that door, MacGowan," said Robert coldly, "and if I should need you I will call out."

MacGowan's seared face wrinkled in an exulting smile, and as he backed away he made a feint with his clenched fist at an imaginary opponent.

Robert pushed the table to one side. Thomas, standing near the closed door, watched him curiously. A burst of cheering from the men outside the gates

was the cue for which Robert might have been waiting.

"Your friends are rather noisy, to-night," he said, with a cynical smile. "Why have you left them?"

Thomas frowned dismally, and shot out his nether lip.

"I came to advise you for your own good, Robert MacWhinnie," he said.

"Very noisy," mused Robert, as though he hadn't heard; "but they'll find that it isn't a brainless fanatic they have to deal with. One fool is enough in any family."

Thomas shifted his position.

"Guard your tongue," he said warningly, "or I'll forget that you are any brother of mine."

"Forget! You'll forget?" Robert's great shoulders were moving rhythmically. "I've already forgotten. It would be an insult to my intelligence—an affront to—to my little girl to regard you as a brother." He laughed outright, and it was a dangerous laugh. "Why, your friends outside those gates would jeer at me for a fool if they heard me call you 'brother.'"

Thomas was not without a certain amount of courage, and although it was patent to his eyes that the man in front of him was near to desperation, he stood his ground and was ready to fling back taunt for taunt.

"One fool in a family!" he echoed. "We're agreed on that point. Do we rightly understand which member of the family is the fool?"

A fusillade of stones rattled against the yard gates.

"Your friends are impatient," said Robert, still in

that cold, cynical tone of voice. "What message have you brought from them?"

"Robert MacWhinnie, keep a tight hold of your tongue! I'm here to help you with advice."

Robert straightened himself, until he towered high above his brother.

"To help me! You! After lighting the fire which you hoped would burn me—and my little girl; after applying the torch to that mass of brushwood! You talk about helping me. My dear fool, your proper place is out there, among them; you should be standing on a platform in their midst, waving your arms about and shrieking and exhorting. Brother of mine! My eldest brother is *dead*. The brother for whom I tried to do so much died a long while ago."

"You think that I am responsible for what is happening out there?"

"I'm certain of it. They are shouting your name. Listen! 'Three cheers for Tom MacWhinnie!' Doesn't it thrill you? They call you 'Tom.' Listen again! Can't you hear them saying 'He is so loyal to us that he would betray his own brother'?"

Robert's eyes were blazing, and his hands were opening and shutting.

"I heard of it only a few hours ago," Thomas said protestingly.

"That was before the flame burst out; you knew that the match had been applied. What a triumph for you! Betrayed his own brother, and his brother's little girl! And if David and Jamie had been here, the triumph would have been all the greater."

"I have come to help you. The men outside sent for me to arbitrate. That was a concession to you."

"Oh! Wonderful! What did they say when they sent for you—'Come along, Iscariot; the kiss is the signal'?"

"You are wronging me."

"No one could do that."

"You're making me responsible for your own folly and conceit. It has been coming about for a long while—ever since you became too big for your shoes—ever since you became the gentleman of the family—ever since the family became too humble for you to recognize them."

A storm of yells from the men outside.

"Very impatient." Robert flung open the office door. "What message did you bring?"

Thomas squared himself, and set his broad-brimmed hat at a firmer angle.

"The men are willing to return to work," he said, with some show of dignity, "if you consent to discuss terms with me or any representative they may feel disposed to select."

Robert made a most exaggerated bow.

"How kind of them! How kind of you! How they must respect you! And honor you!" He was fast losing control of himself. All sense of brotherhood had already departed. This man before him was a stranger, a menace—a menace to the happiness of his little girl, Mori. He wasn't thinking of himself, in that moment. Mori filled his thoughts. Here was the danger to her of which he had dreamed. The shouts of execration that were going up outside the gates were

directed at her. The threatening attitude of the man near him was because of the child.

"It can be settled in five minutes," Thomas muttered; and, now, he was watching a light in the other's eyes—a light he had never before seen.

"Five minutes!" Robert flung off his coat. "It will not take so long as that. They shall have their answer in less than a minute." He strode to the open door and raised his voice for MacGowan. "Swing open the gates, MacGowan," he shouted, "and tell them that I am bringing the answer."

Then he turned upon the quivering Thomas and gripped him around the middle.

"You have given them one lesson in brotherly love," he cried; "they shall have another."

In vain Thomas struggled to free himself. The arms that held him were as strong as steel bands—Mori's face, dancing before the eyes of the desperate Robert, were strengthening them. MacGowan raced on ahead, shouting as he raced. Once he turned back, and, flinging the restraint of the employee aside, held out his brawny arms: "Gi'e him to me, sir," he cried; but Robert was making light of his burden; he was nearly up to the gates. MacGowan opened the side door. Robert pushed his way through. The amazed men outside moved back, and there was silence for a second. Thomas was still struggling and shouting.

"Your answer!" cried Robert, and with a heave of the shoulders he hurled Thomas against the foremost of the strikers.

"Judas!" yelled MacGowan.

And then the stones came—volley after volley. MacGowan leaped in front of Robert, but not before a flint had struck the white, quivering cheek. The blood spurted as Robert stumbled forward, dazed and helpless. MacGowan picked him up as though he were a child. Someone, more daring than the rest, surged forward. MacGowan might have anticipated this, for he turned, and freeing his right hand swung hard for the face. The next minute he was through the gate, the bolts were shot into their sockets, and setting Robert on his feet, he assisted him to the office. The hammering on the gates ceased abruptly, the shouts died down; the men were drawing off. “Mebbe the police; mebbe Judas,” growled MacGowan.

In the office, Robert bathed his wounded cheek, then sank dejectedly into a chair at the table, resting his forehead in the palms of his hands. A great weariness came over him. “Leave me a while, MacGowan,” he said, in a tired voice. “If the police are there, give them every assistance. I’m all right”—as the burly manager bent over his shoulder—“just a little dazed—that’s all.”

But MacGowan was away only a few minutes. He returned to the office. “Mr. MacWhinnie,” he said, in a whisper.

Robert turned slowly, and then he sprang to his feet, his eyes lowered.

“Margaret!” he cried faintly.

She was leaning against the door which MacGowan had closed, and there was as great embarrassment in her face as in his. She must have hurried in her jour-

ney; her cheeks glowed, and for a while she was unable to speak. At last she said:

"We heard of this only half an hour ago. I rowed across the river. My father would have come himself, had he not been indisposed. There was no one else, save—save me. Is it very serious?"

"It is very serious," said Robert, making no attempt to mask his fears.

"One of your own men brought the news to father," she said, "an old apprentice of Drender and Masters—so that father had little time to do anything."

"To do anything?" Robert echoed, still in that strained, whispering voice.

"You have his deep sympathy."

"I thank him from the bottom of my heart," said Robert. "It was what I might have expected from Mr. John Drender."

"And mine," she added, and lowered her eyes even as his were lowered.

He made no reply to that, but the corners of his mouth twitched.

"Father said that according to his reckoning you'd be placed in a very difficult position."

"We have only four days," said Robert, "in which to finish a very important contract, one on the successful execution of which the firm's chances practically depend."

She nodded sympathetically.

"I think that my father must have known that," she said, "because he gave me some hint of it. This letter"—she handed it to him—"he wrote himself. He said that you would understand."

Robert's eyelids flickered as he recognized the familiar handwriting. John Drender had written:

"ROBERT MACWHINNIE.—Drender and Masters gave you your start. For the sake of the reputation of our firm we can't see you go down. I understand that you have a local strike, and that you have only four days in which to finish a big contract. I don't know who's to blame, but I think I could put my hand on him. Take my advice, and make your yard as private as you would your bedroom. Blood may be thicker than water, but there are times when it may become too thick for circulation. We're running short time at the works here, and we have five hundred men who would be only too glad to work overtime—to work double shifts, if you like. We can finish the job for you at a price that'll not hurt you; but I'm thinking that if you show that hand to the men outside your gates they won't hesitate long!"

The letter was shaking; she knew that his heart was full.

"Father regards your firm with a great deal of affection," she said softly, adding, as though she would lessen the significance of the offer: "He was always the same; he takes so much interest in those who have learned their profession under his eye."

Robert folded the letter. Although his eyes were averted, she filled his vision.

"I don't know what to say," he murmured; "this has taken all the strength out of me."

He ventured another glance. She had placed one hand on the door; her big eyes were glowing.

"There was no one else to bring it"—as though some excuse were needed for her presence.

"Some day," he said dreamily, "some day I shall tell you how much I appreciate——"

MacGowan opened the door. Robert beckoned to him, and again unfolded John Drender's letter.

"I'll write a notice, and get you to fix it on the gates, MacGowan. Meanwhile, go down to the water and make ready the dinghy there; I'm going to row Miss Drender across the river; then I'll return for you."

CHAPTER XI

WHERE DUTY ENDS

THERE was no need for Robert to avail himself of the offer made by Mr. Drender; in itself, it was sufficient to show the men the folly of the attitude they had been induced to take up. The promise which had been held out to them of a speedy victory was more than nullified by the fear that Capital, after all, was the stronger—that when capitalists chose to unite their forces or to bring up reinforcements to those who appeared to be weakening in the battle, Labor had nothing to fall back upon. Moreover, the generous position which Robert had taken up, the open manner in which he had bared his confidences to them, appealed more strongly to their sense of justice as hour succeeded hour. They went back, and as a result of the eruption, loyalty received stimulus rather than the reverse, because Robert was careful not to convey a sense of defeat to their minds. A few tactful words left them with the belief that a moral victory had been gained by both sides, and that, after all, is the most desirable end to all quarrels.

Events followed each other quickly. Robert seemed not to have rested from the moment the ultimatum was presented until, at last, the Chilian contract was

completed, and he could afford to lean back and say, "Now, I can look about me!"

During the period of stress no word was received from the prodigal brothers, and it was not until Dick Morrow returned from a visit to the country, and came to the house, that Robert allowed his thoughts to turn to them. Dick had been on a journey of investigation, and the news of the "ten-minute strike," as the newspapers called it, was unknown to him until he returned. It was long after dinner when he reached the house, and everyone, save Robert, was in bed. Dick was agitated, almost to the point of bitterness.

"As soon as I learned the facts," he said, striding to and fro in the study, "I came straight away to see you. My dear old fellow, you've had a rough time, and I can well imagine how you felt, to be standing there fighting a lone hand."

Robert was lying back in his chair, with his hands folded behind his head. The mental and physical strain of the last few days had paled him somewhat, and he was content to nod and smile.

"Fighting a lone hand," Dick repeated, "and anything might have happened."

"No, no, Dick," said Robert quietly. "We're not in the wilds now. You're talking as though we were back in Sendai, building bridges with ill-paid labor. There was some chance of a rough-up in those days."

"I've read the papers," Dick interrupted, with a shake of the head, as to imply that nothing could be hidden from him. "Those men showed that they had carefully sized up the situation before they attempted

to strike. They knew that you were anxious about this contract——”

Robert waved his hand deprecatingly.

“We can’t blame them for that,” he said, still in the quiet voice of one who is content to let the past bury itself. “You would have blamed them had they gone into the fight without any preparation, without a weapon of any sort. Of course, it was their only chance, if they needed a chance, although, God knows, I’ve always tried to be fair.”

“You couldn’t be unfair, if you tried, Robert.”

“Don’t attribute to me qualities I don’t possess, Dick. I can drive as hard a bargain as any man.”

Dick turned his head, and, speaking in a lower tone, said:

“I don’t know what your thoughts on the matter are, Robert, so I can’t say how you’ll receive my comments; but the thing that has hurt me most in this business is the—the estrangement between you and your brothers.”

Robert’s eyelids drooped for a second. In the midst of this trouble, he had striven manfully to set “family affairs” on one side.

“Come, Dick,” he said gently, “you’re talking as though you were part of Robert MacWhinnie himself——”

“Sometimes I think I am,” was the reply.

“——and that what affects me must necessarily affect you.”

“I’m supposed to be a Christian man,” said Dick solemnly, “but if what I hear is true, I shall find it difficult to forgive them. They left you—didn’t they?”

"They are men, Dick. They have their own careers before them. They are entitled to look ahead, and to strive to make a niche for themselves."

"They came to you like prodigal sons, demanding their portion——"

"Someone seems to have been talking about matters that don't concern them."

"They came to you—you, who had done so much for them—and at a time when you most needed their sympathy, they cut themselves adrift, and left you to fight the battle alone."

"Someone's been talking very loudly," murmured Robert, with a faint smile that hinted at his not being displeased that someone should have talked.

"They must have known that this labor trouble was in the air."

"Let's be charitable," came from the tired man in the chair. "It's not like you, Dick, to reveal a vindictive spirit."

Dick came to rest opposite his old friend—came into the arc of light thrown by the reading lamp on the table, so that Robert could see the working of the nomad's rugged face.

"Robert," he said, in a softer voice, "I didn't know that I had a vindictive spirit, until I learned this story of the breaking away of your brothers, and I suppose—I suppose that I shouldn't be sitting here talking to you about them as though I were their judge. But you and I are not ordinary friends."

"No," whispered Robert gratefully.

"I'd like to say more than that, but I hate playing the woman, even to a fellow like you."

"There's no need to say any more," said Robert. "Friends such as we have no use for words when trying to estimate friendship."

"And if I'm disposed to roast these—these prodigals—you're not likely to get up and order me out of the house."

Robert laughed at the suggestion.

"Because I shouldn't go, even if you did," said Dick. . . . "I myself have no brothers, so, perhaps, I am unable to preach about what we may call the duty of one brother to another."

Robert moved uneasily in his chair.

"My dear Dick," he said, "why upset yourself about them? Everything is settled. The battle's over, and the firm is going to move ahead as though nothing had happened. That's something to be thankful for, so why let the past come back like a gray phantom?"

"I have no brothers," Dick repeated slowly, "but if I had, and they behaved to me as yours did to you——"

"Well?"—with a quiet smile.

"Well, I shouldn't have brothers any longer."

"I've always feared that a mistake was made when they put you into the missionary profession."

"I don't think so," said Dick quite seriously; "otherwise, I might have been hanged for homicide. My dear Robert, for a long while now I have taken the liberty of looking into your life——"

Robert reached for his pipe, so that the shadow that flitted across his face was unnoticed by his friend.

"And I'm beginning to realize how big you are."

"Only beginning, Dick? And yet you used to say such nice things about my work out yonder."

"Leave work alone for a minute. Let's get—let's get nearer to each other, Robert. I don't owe you a cent that I know of, except what I've borrowed from you in the name of charity, so that I'm at liberty to speak my mind. You're the only man in the world whom I have been able to call friend, investing the word with everything that it means. Robert, you've been the leaning post too long."

"My dear Dick, I don't think that you've met my brothers more than three times in your life."

"Perhaps not; but I summed them up the first time. They might have been exceedingly clever men, if you hadn't spoiled them."

"Darts come from all quarters," said Robert, feigning reproachfulness.

"It's true," said Dick, shaking his head vigorously. "Look at it calmly. Think it out. Analyze the situation without leaving a single part untouched, and what would be the result? You must realize that your great-heartedness, your disposition to play the fairy godfather at every turn, has robbed them of the most valuable asset a man can have—independence of spirit. If they had been compelled to start life as you started it, they might have done as much, and more. Instead of that, you've taught them to prop their shoulders against that metaphorical leaning post, and to expect somebody or everybody to do their work for them."

"Dick! Dick! You're forgetting your profession."

"I'm not. It's because I feel that one of the first

duties in that profession is to make men out of neglected material that I'm speaking to you like this. Robert, it may sound incongruous in me to say it, but there is a limit to forbearance. To go beyond that limit is very near to sin. You didn't take up the right attitude when they came to you for their portion."

"Do tell me who's been talking, Dick?"

Dick gave him a quick glance.

"No," he said, "I won't tell you, because it wouldn't help—just now. But it's obvious that the person was well-informed. Bless me! I was told of the exact amount you parted with, and yet"—he smiled dryly—"I have to go on my hands and knees to you for a paltry hundred. No, you should have been strong then, Robert, much stronger than you were. Because they were your brothers, you had no right to assume that they were not men."

"Steady, Dick!"

"Oh, I'm going steadily! There's a lot more to come—because I'm going away, Robert."

"Going away? Again?" The smile left Robert's face.

"And I may not have another opportunity of telling you of all that's in my mind, and has been there for a long while. I don't know your brother Thomas. If I should have an opportunity of meeting him——"

Robert rose from his chair and went over to his friend.

"Look here, Dick," he said, "you're a good fellow, one of the best I have ever met, but it's obvious to me that you don't know as much as you profess to know about me and the members of my family. So don't

say any more, because it might hurt both you and me. Family claims are not to be discussed like this."

Dick shrugged his shoulders and walked across the room.

"I don't want to say anything that would hurt you, Robert," he said; "but it's my experience that family claims give rise to more unhappiness, they stifle more ambition, they crush more hopes, than any other phase of human life. I know that I'm not talking like a missionary. I confess that I don't feel like one, at the moment. I'm putting myself in your place, or trying to, and the nearer I get to it the harder I want to strike out in your defense."

"My dear boy, I'm quite strong enough to defend myself."

"I know you are, but you're not strong enough to understand yourself. You never attempt to ask the why and the wherefore. You're an anomaly. You're an enigma to me, because you're so unnaturally good—I nearly said soft, which is a word that is possibly more familiar to you than to me. I know what you've done for the MacWhinnie family. I guessed it while you were out yonder. You were always catching the mail, and always with a registered envelope. No one knows better than I what you went through out yonder. You suffered enough to crush a hundred men, but you went through it so bravely that to judge from your face and your manner, you might never have felt it."

"Why wear your heart on your sleeve?"

"True, the world has no sympathy for the lachrymose. The world is terribly selfish; it must always be

entertained; if it can transmit its sympathy through a wave of laughter, so much the better. I wonder if they, your brothers, have any knowledge of all you suffered out there, and, if they have, what do they think of it?"

"Ah, you don't know them, Dick, although you think you do! They're good boys, all of them, and no matter what you may say, I shall never feel that the duty I owe them is liquidated."

"What duty?"

"They had to stand by while I was given my chance. Those were the days when we counted, not only our pennies, but the mouthfuls with which we were fed. You argue that they ought to be grateful to me for what I was able to do for them when they reached manhood, but you make no allowance for what they did for me when I was a youngster, and it's when you're young that you need most help. They had to subdue any ambitions they might have had, in order that I should realize mine."

"They couldn't put brains into your head if they were not there already."

"You're ungenerous, Dick, and it isn't like you."

"But think what you were able to do for them later—what you did for them. Why, it's hardly conceivable that you should have done so much. It's a straining of the duty of brotherhood. Not that I would say a word about it, if they had been blessed with the slightest spark of gratitude. It was your money that made 'MacWhinnie Brothers' possible. I remember how you used to talk about that dream when we were

in the Far East. Always, you had before your mind a vision of a signboard——”

“Don’t, Dick,” said Robert suddenly.

“You haven’t forgotten the dream?”

“No; but it calls up—other things.”

“I know,” said Dick, with great tenderness, and for a while neither of them spoke. On Dick’s face there was an expression of sadness as deep as that on Robert’s. Both of them were journeying back over the twelve thousand miles of land and water.

And, after that pause, Dick went back to his subject as though he were not to be shaken off.

“I came here to-night to have it out with you, Robert,” he said, “for you need to have it out with somebody. It’s time you awakened.”

“Almost time I was in bed,” said Robert, with a little laugh.

“What did they say when they heard of this trouble at the works?”

“Let the boys alone,” Robert urged. “They have enough trouble of their own just now.”

“Ah! you know that, do you? Someone told me that you were so preoccupied with your own affairs that you were not likely to have seen it—the failure, I mean.”

“The failure of the Scottish Pinion Company?”

“After only three months. What did I say about brains, just now?”

“Don’t be cruel, Dick. I dare say the boys didn’t receive the encouragement they expected.”

“Certainly they didn’t receive much financial backing, for according to the papers the failure will not be

a heavy one. They lacked a head, and if this failure isn't the swiftest retribution——"

Robert knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"I do wish you'd alter that note, Dick," he said. "You can't imagine how it grates. Even a friend, a friend like you, has no right to assume that a man can listen calmly while his brothers are being attacked. I tell you that I'm satisfied the boys did their best, and I would have given anything to have saved them this setback. If it had come in two or three years' time, it wouldn't have been so bad, because they would have gained at least experience of managing a concern; and it's no easy matter, Dick."

"I suppose they had it in their minds that with the capital they obtained from you they would be able successfully to run a concern of the nature of the Scottish Pinion Company?"

"I don't know what was in their minds," said Robert. "I only know that they must be going through a heart-breaking job just now."

"Did they appeal to you for advice?"

"No; but I sent it, all the same."

"You would—that's like you. And I'll wager that it didn't stop at advice."

"I'm a creditor, if that's what you mean."

"I thought so. And I know another."

Robert raised his eyes inquiringly.

"Mr. John Drender," said Dick, in a whisper; and again there came a period of silence. Then Robert said, with the slightest break in his voice:

"I wish they'd told me that—I wish I had known." Then, he looked the question.

"No," said Dick, "he was not the petitioning creditor. I can tell you that without fear of contradiction. In fact, I happen to know that if they had appealed to Mr. Drender, he would have endeavored to help them out of their difficulties. John Drender has a big heart, Robert. . . . Have I said anything to offend you?"

"No," said Robert quietly, but his back was turned, all the same.

"I'm a frequent visitor at Jarrowside, Robert—you know that? Since I have been in England I have seen a great deal both of Mr. Drender and his daughter. She's doing a splendid work, for the sheer love of working. I admire these brave, independent women who creep about furtively doing all the good they can, and fearing all the while that someone will learn of it. . . . Yes, John Drender was a pretty substantial creditor."

"Let's talk of something else," said Robert, catching at his breath.

"Yes, if it pleases you, old fellow. But before we leave the subject, I should dearly like to learn what you intend to do in the matter of the Scottish Pinion Company."

"I've already done it," said Robert. "The boys are coming back. The firm of MacWhinnie Brothers is making a fresh start."

CHAPTER XII

A NIGHT OF CONFIDENCES

FOR fully a minute after Robert's statement Dick Morrow stared at him in amazement. Then the outburst:

"Is there no limit to your generosity? Man, do you never think of yourself?" And before Robert could reply, the missionary overcame the candid friend. Dick reached for Robert's hand. "You may never receive here the appreciation you deserve," he said, "but a man cannot do all that you've done and be overlooked."

He walked to the door, keeping his eyes down. Robert called to him: "You're not going, Dick?"

"I'm only going to close this door," said Dick. Then he came back, and Robert could see by the expression of his face that he was struggling with a doubt. He sat down on his chair, got up again, and walked about the floor; he charged his pipe, lighted it, and allowed it to go out. And at last it came. He was standing behind Robert at the time, resting a hand on his shoulder.

"Robert," he said, in a low breath, and his face was working pitifully, "give me all the latitude you can. I told you a little while ago that I was going away again. It may be for the last time. . . . No, I'm not going to

trot out all the old platitudes. You know me better than that. But you know, also, the chances a man has to take in the East, especially when those hours of loneliness come, when he wonders if he's doing anything in the Big Scheme that is worthy of notice, and doubts. . . . I'm going away, because I like taking chances, but perhaps there's another reason. Here, I'm too fettered. I don't get the air my lungs need. I never feel that—well, that I'm a missionary. I feel too much like a paid servant—not that they pay much. That's a deplorable confession for a missionary to make. Nevertheless, I'm sincere. Everything here is so terribly congested. There are no openings in the press through which the wind may sweep. And there's a lack of understanding among the people, a lack of sympathy. I know what is on your lips; but I've confessed to you over and over again that as a missionary I'm something of an anomaly, as I said about you. I can do good work out in the wild places; I know I can; I've had proof of it again and again. I take credit for having made some really first-class men out of the blackest material, inside and out, that ever lived in the corners of the world. And it's been work that I joyed in, and I don't mind telling you why: it's helped me to forget things that I was all the better for forgetting. . . . Don't interrupt me, Robert. This is an opportunity that may never occur again, and I do want to take advantage of it, every minute, Robert"—he stooped a little, so that his brow almost touched Robert's crown—"since we've been together this time we have never mentioned *her* name—once."

"Jean," said Robert, without moving his lips.

"Yes—Jean," said Dick. "And yet, I've known all along that you wanted to speak about her."

"I was thinking of you, old man."

"Yes, you're always thinking of the other fellow. I wonder if you have any idea of what her death meant to me? I don't think I myself have any adequate idea, because when I allow my mind to dwell on it, I can hardly believe that God could have been so cruel. . . . No, Robert, forget that. It wasn't right. But a man does become embittered."

Robert raised his hand over his shoulder, and Dick grasped it.

"When she died, Robert—and this is an awful thing for any man to say, and especially so in my case—I almost became a skeptic. But you saved me."

"I?"

"Yes, you. Just for a while I felt as though a small world had fallen on my shoulders. I was groaning beneath the weight. I felt that it would be better to sink beneath it. And then I saw another man—you—and on your shoulders was a world greater than mine, and on your face was the smile of the hero. You made me feel a horrible coward. You were bearing your greater burden with so much pluck, with so much sunshine in your face, though all the while your heart must have been bursting; while I—I was whining; and yet I should have been the stronger, because of the Service into which I had entered."

Robert was holding his breath, and staring straight in front of him.

"You did a wonderful lot for me in those days,

Robert," Dick went on. "In the years that immediately followed her death, I attempted much from which others shrank; but when it was sought to give me credit for it, I felt like turning round and shouting, shouting at the top of my voice: 'Thank Robert MacWhinnie, not me!' And then I came home to find you here, not relieved of your burden, but shouldering even a greater. Robert, old man, do you know that you're not nearly so young as you used to be? I noticed it to-night, when I came in first. Your hair's grayer, and although you pretend to think nothing of the injustices, of the pain, of the ingratitude that have been your portion, I think I can see beneath that grave smile of yours. In fact, I know I can. . . . Robert! . . . Robert, I know of your love for Margaret Drender."

He didn't move.

"I didn't know the whole of the facts until a month ago. You will remember that while out yonder you never mentioned the name of the woman who was inspiring you, the woman for whose sake you were always climbing, climbing. I came back, and I hardly liked to tell even you, the broadest-minded man in the world, why I came. I told you that it was for a rest, or something like that; but it wasn't, Robert. At the time I decided to come, I was away up in the north of Manchuria, and then, as always, I was practically without money. But something urged me to come. It was time, so the something said, that I stirred myself, and showed a deeper appreciation of a great man's friendship than thinking kindly of him while sitting in a mud hut in the swamps. Something said:

'Morrow, you've never tried to get beneath that quiet, cheerful smile of Robert MacWhinnie.' I wanted to do something for you, Robert, and I felt that I could do it. Believe me, I was ignorant of the true state of things at that time; but I got down to Vladivostock by degrees, and—I'm not saying this to enlist your sympathies—I came back to England as a stoker on a tramp steamer. And then I learned the truth. . . . Robert, you still love her. You have always loved her. There has been only one woman in your life since you were a young man, and she's going to remain in your life until the material Robert MacWhinnie has passed on. And here you are, suffering in silence, receiving all the slings and arrows without a murmur—without the sympathy of a single soul."

"You're wrong, Dick—you're wrong," came from Robert, and his voice was very weak. "I have the sympathy of one."

"Robert, you have her sympathy. She, too, is suffering in silence, and, like you, she's going about with a brave face, as though nothing had ever happened to lead her away from happiness. Why don't you go to her, Robert? Do you know that she's waiting there, waiting a word from you? Why do you allow her to suffer? Why do you allow yourself to suffer?"

"It isn't all suffering," said Robert quietly. "And there are reasons, Dick, which must be kept even from you, old friend."

"They cannot be kept from me, Robert, because I know them already."

He came from behind the chair, and Robert rose to

his feet, his lips parted, and in his eyes an expression almost of fear.

"It's true," said Dick, and his words were all broken. "It was Jean who told me." His voice sank to a whisper.

"Jean told you?" Robert was swaying slightly. His shoulders brushed the mantelshelf, and he leaned heavily against it, as though thankful for its support.

"She knew that she was going to die," said Dick, "and she told me of what you had done—told me about Mori."

The house was very quiet. There was no wind outside. Robert's breathing was so hard and labored that the sound filled the room.

"At first, I thought that it was but the wandering of her poor sick mind, for she was undergoing a great deal of pain; but toward the end she became clearer, and more rational. Indeed, the change in her was so marked that I believed she had turned the corner. I know, now, that she herself believed that. I raised her head, and she lay in my arms. I begged her to make a great effort, and said to her, 'You are my bride, Jean—don't you see what it all means to me?' And then she told me the story. She said that she had meant to tell me for a long while, and she wanted my forgiveness. There was another relapse, and almost the last words she spoke were 'My poor Robert!'"

Dick walked to the window and drew aside the curtain. He said with a little laugh, vainly forced to hide his emotions: "How she used to talk of the mast-head lights, as they twinkled down the river of a night!"

Robert waited a moment; then he called his friend back to the fireplace.

"Tell me this," he said, and his voice was quite firm, "knowing what you do, is Jean, my sister, still——" Although he had commenced it bravely, he couldn't finish the sentence; but Dick understood.

"She's in here, old fellow," he said, touching his breast, "and she'll always be there, until there's no Dick Morrow. What would you have? Is your conception of my friendship such that for a moment, for a second, you could think that *that* could make any difference?"

"Thanks," said Robert, and now he turned to pace the floor. Dick watched him in silence for a while. Then he said to him:

"If I could go away with the knowledge that I had brought you two together again, I should feel that some good purpose had been served by my coming into the world."

Robert returned to his side, and shook his head.

"No, Dick, old fellow," he said. "What you have said to-night has lifted—lifted from my shoulders nearly the whole of that world you were speaking about. But you can't bring us together. . . . Yes, I do love her. I never loved another woman as I loved her, and I see, now, because I know I shall have your sympathy, what it has cost me to watch her growing older, to see myself growing older, and knowing that we cannot become younger, we cannot retrace our steps. Dick, there have been times, especially when the work wasn't going right, when those slings and arrows seemed the thickest—there have been times when I

have been almost tempted to brush everything aside and go to her. But it's too late."

Dick's eyes were shining in the subdued light of the lamp. He clapped Robert on the shoulder and laughed, because he didn't fully comprehend the significance of the words.

"Too late?" he echoed. "Nonsense! You're going to be happy, Robert."

"Yes, it is too late," was the reply. "I'm thinking of the child."

"My dear fellow"—Dick stepped back from him—"do you suppose that for one minute she would hesitate? She loves the child already. You must have seen that yourself."

Robert asked him, almost fiercely: "You haven't told her, Dick? Say you haven't told her! I believe that would be the only thing I couldn't forgive."

"No, I haven't told her," said Dick. "You and I are the only two living persons who know."

Robert felt for the other's hand.

"Good!" he said, with a deep sigh. "I can trust you, Dick."

"But why—why should you maintain that attitude? You cannot doubt that Margaret——"

"That's not everything," said Robert. "I took my poor sister's burden on my shoulders because I loved her, and because I loved to think of the honor of the MacWhinnies. I pledged myself to protect her—because the world is very cruel, Dick. I gave my promise when she was alive. Death didn't relieve me of it. It strengthened it. If you could go on loving Jean after death, what of me?"

"But, Robert, Jean would never have permitted you to suffer as you have suffered. If she was brave enough to put my love to the test, do you think that, had she been able to foresee all that was likely to happen to you, she would have hesitated? Indeed, there would have been no need of it, because"—and Dick's voice broke again—"because, Robert, the joy that is yours now would have been mine. Oh! How I have envied you Mori! No, Robert, I think that you're wrong in your assumptions."

"And I know that I'm right," said Robert. "Listen: Don't imagine for one moment that when this happened, when Mori came into the world at Nagasaki and when Jean went out of it a few months later—don't imagine that I was so heroic that I never considered for a minute what I had sacrificed. I did. I fought many a battle with my weaker self, up in the hills. Once—God forgive me!—I looked at the child as a slave might look at the chain that bound him to the galley. That went on for some time—meanwhile, there was plenty of work to do, and that helped to keep my mind from the morbid side of it. But one morning, Dick—and I can't explain this to you—I awoke early, jumped into a jinrikisha, and went five miles up-country to inspect a culvert that we had been engaged on. There was no one about, and while I was examining a sluice, a pinion broke, and the next thing I remember was finding half a dozen of the workmen kneeling by my side trying to pump the water out of me. They told me that had they arrived a minute or two later, I should have been drowned. While I was lying there on the bank, I seemed to hear a voice

calling to me: 'What should *I* have done, if anything had happened to you?' And then, Dick, I began to feel a pair of soft little arms entwining themselves around my heart. A little more, and she was running about the compound and chattering. I began to look for her, became jealous of the native nurse, when the child wouldn't come to me from her arms. And then her face commenced to creep into my work, no matter where I was. When the hammers were ringing against the girders, it was her voice. When I sat down near a brook, the singing of the water was her voice again. And then, quite suddenly, Dick, it came to me that I hadn't made any sacrifice at all. I had been given a reward, a greater reward than I had ever dreamed of. When she was no more than three, we began to talk to each other just as though we were both grown-up. I used to tell her stories, and it was wonderful—the light of understanding in her little face. A little more, Dick, only a little, and she began to tell me stories. Ah! that was the most wonderful part of all, the greatest joy of all. There never was a child with such an imagination. The compound, where the wistaria and the cherry trees blossomed as though it were to please her, was a place of mystery, of fairy lore. She and I had fallen off the edge of the world in our dreams, so she imagined, and dropped through a sea of silver cloud to another world of flowers. . . . Oh, how it all comes back, Dick, old man! . . . She gave every flower, every reed, every nook in that compound a baby name of her own, and sometimes—sometimes I believed that they answered her when she called to them. The work, the struggles, the fever of competi-

tion—everything that has come into my life since those dear days—has made no impression on those memories; they are still fresh as though the dew of early morning drenched them and made them sweeter than yesterday.”

He quickened his pace across the floor, and his hands were opening and shutting convulsively, as the mind swung back. The weariness of the day slipped from him; his eyes were glowing with the ecstasy of youth; the color had returned to his cheeks. It seemed to the watching friend that all along a great joy had dwelt behind a grave and patient mask, and was now finding expression for the first time.

“Dick”—he had turned on his heel, and his head was slightly bowed—“if the joy of parenthood is more intense, it must be grandeur. How it gripped, thrilled, lifted me—the joy of her companionship! The straining of the heart when she was out of my sight—the bursting of all that was in me when I held her in my arms of an evening!

“I wish you could have seen that compound as we saw it. There was the great, gray ocean that would take us years and years to cross—it was only the goldfish pond; there was the mighty liner on which we were to set out—it was only a piece of cork with a feather for a sail; there was the treasure island, just beyond the horizon, where the fairies stored their jewels—only the rockery that Mimosa San had made!

“... And a little more, Dick, and she was my housekeeper, who must needs shake her curls and wonder and wonder if my flannels were aired, if my topee were properly ventilated, if my appetite was all that it

ought to be, if I really ought to have a second cup of tea at breakfast, and if . . . Oh, God! Don't you understand, Dick?" He stopped, and covered his face with his hands, his great shoulders shaking to his sobs. . . . "Dick, can't you see her baby face as I unwind her arms from my neck and say 'No, you are not my little girl! I am not your daddy! I've been lying—lying—lying, all these years, and what *they* say is true. You are nobody—nobody's child, and if the world chooses to spurn you, darling, I can't prevent it."

Dick dared not trust himself to speak; his heart and his eyes were full; but he went over to the shaking man and placed his arm on his shoulder with all the tenderness of a woman.

"All right, old fellow," said Robert, raising his head and smiling with courage. "It's not going to happen. I'm living for her, my little girl. Everything I do is for her. I know what you would say; that no one would be so uncharitable as to give her needless pain—that is the thought of a Christian man; the pity of it is that we Christians, as we call ourselves, always look for Christian thought in the other man. And this—this namelessness of my darling is one of the difficulties, one of the barriers which your Christianity makes no attempt to surmount. Oh, I've thought of it, wrestled with it, given credit for this, considered that, but in the end the result has always been the same! There is only one kind of armor that will save her—because, Dick, even the law sets its face against her! The smug, sanctimonious, hypocritical law—it points its finger at that child—the child that God made in His image and made so beautiful—it points its

finger at her and says, in effect: 'You are a pariah! You are a symbol of immorality——' ”

“Robert—my dear old Robert!”

“You cannot get away from it, Dick. I’ve tried to think as you are thinking now. But it’s no good. Make all the allowance you please, and you’re bound to come back to the starting point. Your law—your Society—shakes its sentient head; it would rather insult God for giving the child an existence than offend the susceptibilities of its members.”

“You’ve allowed it to prey on your mind, Robert. It has become an obsession——”

“Nothing of the sort. It was an obsession in the first place, but I’ve had ten years in which to think it all out. That’s why I’m living for her now. I shall have her educated in the finest seminary in the world; the investments I have made in her behalf are gilt-edged—I am taking no risks—and when she is a woman she will have that armor at which I hinted a moment ago. Work! Yes, I’m working hard now, but I’m going to work harder so that there shall be no flaw in that armor if I can help it. . . . Wait! I know what you are going to say. There is no phase that I have overlooked. The day may come when her heart will be given. . . . Yes”—he gulped down the sob—“I am prepared for that. I shall take the man aside and talk to him just as I am talking to you now. And if his love is not strong enough to bear the test——”

He turned his head quickly, for Dick had seen something in the blue eyes that brought fear into his own.

“But he will stand the test,” said Robert, with an access of courage and determination. “There! I have

told you everything; there is no other man in the world to whom I would have said as much, but you—you are Dick Morrow, and that means such a lot. Besides, you loved—you loved Jean. You love her now. . . . Dick, I'll never forget you for that."

Dick's lips tightened; he closed his eyes for a second.

"And she loved you," Robert went on, "although I don't suppose you need to be told that. I think she loved you the first time she met you—at the tea house in Sendai; because when we returned to the bungalow there was a different note in her voice. . . . We talked it over, Dick, after you went. Her heart was very near to breaking—I'm certain of that. And later, after Mori came, there was no evading the shadow, but I promised her, then, that I would speak to you."

"Don't, Robert. Let's speak of you, yourself."

"Why worry about me, my dear old friend? I have Mori."

"If only Margaret knew!"

"She must never know."

"Is it fair to her—to yourself?"

"I have to consider what is fair to the child. Margaret, if I read her eyes aright, has got past the pain—it happened so long ago. I think we both of us found the palliative in work."

Dick returned to his chair near the fire; he was leaning forward, his chin resting in his hands.

"Time has made no change in your feelings—in your love?" he said softly.

"Is it possible?"

"And yet you are unwilling to put her love to the test? You seem afraid to trust your secret to her."

"It's not that, Dick. I want you thoroughly to understand my point of view. It's Mori's secret as much as it is mine, and I cannot ask her to let me confide in another."

"But, Robert, Margaret would be the last person in the world to——"

"I grant you that. But you must look ahead. Mori will soon begin to ask questions. Margaret would have to lie to her, and—and a girl is so sensitive to hesitancy."

"I have met few women like Margaret Drender, Robert."

"There is no other."

"And I know that she's suffering, just as you are. Oh! she's grand, man, in her courage . . . and life is so very short."

Robert was facing the door.

"Grand!" he echoed. "How great a woman can be! You heard that it was Mr. Drender who saved me the other day—when the situation looked so black that I was as near as possible to sheer desperation?"

"I heard of it, Robert."

"He offered to place his works and men at my disposal until the Chilian contract was finished. He hinted that the reputation of his firm was at stake—it was he who had given me my start in engineering."

"I can well imagine his doing it."

Robert gripped the edge of the table.

"It took my breath away," he said; "such magnanimity gives one a firmer faith in human nature. . . ."

There was no one to bring his message, save Margaret herself. She came—she came like a vision in a dream. One moment, I was crushed, defeated. I felt that the whole world had turned its back upon me. And then the door opened, and she was standing there with compassion in her beautiful eyes. She gave me her father's letter, and conveyed an expression of his sympathy, and—and—oh! you can't get into my mind, Dick."

"I can—I can."

"The men were clamoring at the gates. I fancied that they might guess the object of her visit, so I rowed her across the river to 'Jarrowside.' . . . Dick, it seemed so strange, so ludicrous, that we should be sitting in that boat, talking to each other as though we were merely acquaintances. You cannot imagine how hard I had to fight with myself. . . . Will she ever forgive me?"

"If she learned the truth—yes; if not, what can you expect? You should have told her long ago."

Robert flung out his hands despairingly.

"How can I hope to make anyone understand?" he exclaimed. "I know that my actions throughout must convey an impression of—of stupidity; but ponder the circumstances, Dick, and you will find a reason for them. You may suggest that when Jean died I became a free agent—well, I have told you of my thoughts of Mori. You may say that when I returned to England, it would have been the right and proper thing to go to Margaret and . . . But you overlook the fact that I had slighted her, brutally insulted her. And then there was the difficulty——"

"Of the lie you caused to be published?"

"Enough, Dick! There's nothing to be gained by going over the old ground, although I'm better for having told you all this. Now, let's talk about your plans."

"I'm sailing in a few weeks' time. I'm not certain of the date."

Robert went back to the fireplace.

"Why don't you settle down?" he asked persuasively. "Why not stay with me? I'll do anything to keep you at home."

"Thanks, Robert. I'm not an invalid yet; and I couldn't stand the rattle of the hammers in your yard."

"The same independent, crazy old Dick!"

"Wait till I make the acquaintance of Yellow Jack, or lose a leg to an alligator, or get snake-bite so bad that I can't walk without crutches—then I'll take up my abode with you."

"I never met a man like you. I don't think you'll ever come to an anchor."

"Not so long as the engines keep going, Robert."

"And yet, you get nothing out of it—this restless wandering from swamp to swamp. Do you?"

"No"—very quietly—"nothing save peace—forgetfulness." He was staring at the ceiling, and the big eyes were glistening again.

"Ah, yes!" Robert sighed. "But, before Jean came into your life——"

"I was a wanderer. I'll tell you why. Somewhere in the world there is a foster-brother of mine. I wronged him, misjudged him, while we were at col-

lege together, and he went away—no one knows where. Then I discovered my mistake, and since that day I have been looking for him. . . . Good night, Robert.”

He was at the door before Robert could open his lips. “I’ll be round to see Mori to-morrow or the following day. Don’t trouble to get up. I can let myself out.”

CHAPTER XIII

DICK MORROW'S GOOD-BY

THAT parting from Dick Morrow left a deeper impression on Robert's mind than any other he could remember; there was something prophetic about it, and presentiments disturbed him as he paced to and fro. The study seemed strangely empty and lonely.

"I wonder if he meant it—the going away?" he muttered to himself. "I wish that I'd called him back."

Although the hour was late, he sat down and wrote a long letter to his old friend, begging him to refrain from making any arrangements to leave the country until they should have an opportunity of further discussing the matter. "Mori and I would miss you more than I could say," he wrote, "but even if my friendship must not stand in the way of what you believe to be your duty, try to strain a point in her favor. How is she to get along without you? I want you to watch her grow up into womanhood, Dick, and (perhaps this is only sentiment engendered by our talk to-night) I should like to think that if anything happened to me, say, in the works, there would still be Uncle Dick on whom she could lean, to whom she could turn for advice. To-morrow, I shall tell her that in you she

has a kind of sanctuary whose beauty is never to be doubted."

But he was not allowed to tell Mori. There was a telegram awaiting him at the works the next morning: "Don't say anything to my little sweetheart. Am writing.—DICK."

And nearly a week passed before he heard from him again.

"The *Wakasa Maru* is going out on the second tide—to-morrow night—and I'm going with her. For three days I have been haunting the river. The smell of the tarred ropes is in my nostrils; my heart is just aching for the East. We weigh anchor at nine o'clock—will you come down to have a last word? Please don't bring my little O Mori San. Think of all the sweetest stories you have told her during the last ten years, and invent a sweeter to deceive her. I shall write to her from the land of chrysanthemums and sunsets and muddy creeks."

Robert went down to Tilbury, and the Dick Morrow he encountered on the foredeck of the ship was far different from the one he had known a few days before. There were not many passengers, for which fact Dick expressed his gratitude.

"I couldn't stand them on this trip, old boy," he said to Robert. "I want to be alone. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't," Robert replied. "I don't think that I shall ever get into the depths of your mind."

Dick tried to laugh in the old, old way, but there was no ring in it. Subterfuge was not for that moment.

"You will, some day, Robert," he said, slipping his arm under that of his friend and urging him into a promenade of the deck. "I want to be by myself on this occasion, and I've tipped the chief steward to give me a berth in the officers' alleyway, where I shan't run the risk of having inquisitive people bursting into my cabin to smoke their last pipes of a night. You know the kind of thing? I'm going to do a pile of work—reading up and so forth. When I come back"—he paused—"when I come back, I may surprise you with my theoretical knowledge of engineering."

He became more excited as the bustling on the gangway increased, and he seemed intent on monopolizing the conversation; he hardly allowed Robert a word.

"Don't waste time by asking me a lot of questions I can't answer," he said. "I've written to you—you'll find the letter at home, if your postal service is all that you boast of—and in that letter I've answered every question that is on your lips now. Don't talk, old boy; it's the quiet, reticent Robert MacWhinnie that I love the most, and that's the impression I want to take away with me. . . . What did you say to my little sweetheart? . . . No, don't tell me—not yet. Write to me at Colombo, and I shall look for a line when we touch Singapore, and if the agent doesn't bring me a letter at Hongkong I shall cable to learn the reason. . . . The child is in my mind, Robert; I can't get her out of it. . . . Couple of old fools—aren't we?—you and I. . . . Say, Robert, I'm just dying to get back to the East. Take that in the right

way. It sounds like rudeness, but it isn't anything of the sort. . . . I was at headquarters yesterday—the Missionary Society—and they told me that there's more work awaiting me than when I first went out as a young man. That's what I want—work—gruelling work—and I don't care what kind of work it is. . . . Look out, Robert, there's a sling coming over the side, and these beggars don't know the elementary rules of running a winch——”

“Dick—Dick——”

“Don't talk—there's a good fellow.” In the flare of the arc lamp hung against the mast, Dick's face was unnatural in color, and his eyes were brighter than ever; he was trembling with excitement, but steadfastly refused to allow Robert a word. “I've obtained a berth on the starboard side. Cunning old sea-dog—eh? When we strike the monsoon I shall have all the air, so that there'll be no need to get on deck for it. Oh! there isn't a single thing forgotten: acid drops to quench the thirst until we reach the 'line,' where limes are to be bought, boracic powder to keep the prickly heat away, and all the rest of it. . . . We ought to make a good trip, Robert. How I wish you were coming with me. . . . No, no, I didn't mean that. You have to stay. Your work is here—and what work it is! And you're going to be happy, Robert—happier than ever you've been in the past. Bless me, I shan't be surprised if there isn't a letter at Hongkong. In your happiness, you'll forget me as you would an uneventful yesterday. . . . Oh! I shall miss this hammering on the river. I used to think that silence was grandeur, but I know different, now. . . . Skip that

hawser. . . . You don't want to inspect my cabin, do you? No, it's chockablock with books and packages and what not. I'm an untidy beggar, but there'll be plenty of time to put things shipshape before we strike the Inland Sea. . . . I'll write to you, Robert—every other mail—and I shall always be thinking of you, and of the hammering. What a glorious chorus when the beggars are rattling the rivets home! I was watching a kiddy throw red-hot 'uns to a riveter yesterday. Never saw such skill. Oh! I shall miss the noise when I'm out yonder—away up in the hills where you smell the sulphur and wait in silence for a mountain to yawn and spit out its fire. Awful silence— isn't it? You remember. Reminds you of—of a blind elephant trying to pick up a needle in a dead world. Eh? . . . There goes the bell. Visitors ashore. Off you go. . . . Here! Give me another grip——”

There was a great lump in Robert's throat, but as he grasped the extended hand and held it tight, he managed to burst out:

“Dick! You dear old roamer. You haven't given me a chance. I can't let you go like this.”

“All visitors ashore,” Dick urged. “Can't you hear the little Japanese quartermaster with his *hayaku! hayaku!*”

He hurried his friend to the side, almost thrust him on the gangway, then ran quickly along the deck to the stern, where he leaned over the rails and waved a handkerchief. The men on the wharf cast off; the great ropes splashed into the water, to be hauled out by the little, brown-faced, slanty-eyed deck hands gathered in the bows. The engine telegraph clanged, the

propellers gurgled as they smote the water; the Blue Peter on the mainmast straightened itself out in the wind; the ship backed slowly into midstream; from the direction of the steerage came the whining of a melodeon, and in the stern a white handkerchief fluttered.

Robert turned away. Very little was needed to make him play the woman. He forced a path through the crowd of laborers and people who had come on a similar errand to his own, and as he reached the gateway a soft hand was placed on his arm.

Margaret Drender!

She, too, had come out of the press from the wharf, and her eyes were filled even as his.

"You came to see him off?" Robert offered his arm, and she did not hesitate to take it. "And you didn't see him?"

"Yes, I saw him," she replied, brushing the unruly hair from her eyes. "I was here an hour ago. Poor fellow! He could scarcely contain himself; and usually he is so calm and deliberate in his movements."

Robert nodded. "He hurried me ashore," he said, "as though he were glad to get rid of me."

"He told me"—they were crossing the road toward the railway station—"he told me that you would be here."

"And you waited?" Robert's left hand lifted to where hers was resting on his forearm. He was conscious of a great peace—of the approach of a great joy. She made no reply to his remark. They reached the entrance to the station.

CHAPTER XIV

OUT OF BONDAGE

ON the way to Fenchurch Street Station, they had the carriage to themselves, and yet they had almost covered the distance before either of them spoke. Frequently, he caught himself peeping furtively at the big understanding eyes, and it was hard to remember that he was no more than an acquaintance—a friend. The imagination that had built so many fairy worlds for Mori was barren when it tried to forget the years, and all that happened in those years, between the night when he wound his arms around her neck—when her dear arms encircled his, and they looked to the future like two privileged ones gazing into paradise. There was a streak of gray—a very faint one—in the dark, wavy hair; it should not have been there, considering her years; but grief and regret find their reflection in gray; there were tiny creases across the dear forehead that had been so white and smooth, and there was a calm in the repose of the features that comes only from resignation. He was sitting very close to her; he could feel the warmth of her shoulder; and had he dared incline his head, never so slightly, he could have brushed her hair with his lips. . . .

“I wanted sympathy, and you’d gone!”

Poor Jean! Her white face was looking at him through the darkened window of the carriage; and she was smiling so encouragingly; it was as though she knew he was nearing the happiness for which she had prayed even when the film was drifting across her vision and the promise of everlasting peace was numbing the pain of the fever. . . .

Margaret looked up.

"You will miss him—Mr. Morrow?"

"One makes so few friends," he said, "that it will be a long while before the pain of his absence is forgotten."

"And Mori—the little girl. How she will miss him! He loved her very dearly."

The train came to a stop. He assisted her to alight.

"If you will wait here a moment," he said, "I will endeavor to get a cab."

He left her on the platform for a while, her cheeks as flushed as his. When he returned she was in the center of a throng that had just poured from a second train, so that he was compelled to force his way to her side. In the circumstances, it was only natural that he should place his arm around her waist; it was only natural that she should press closer to him. The joy of the protector moved him. Once, he had to bend low his head to catch an inquiry from her lips; his cheek touched hers, slightly brushed it—no more—but his heart beat the faster. They reached the waiting cab. The driver leaned forward for instructions. Robert turned to Margaret, and there was a plea in his voice as he said: "Mori may be awake. It will not take a moment to look in and see if she is all

right." Margaret inclined her head, and stepped into the cab; he seated himself beside her, but the words that he wished to utter refused to break through his lips.

She spoke to him about the work, the effects of the recent trouble with the men, the promise of lasting success that seemed to be held out to MacWhinnie Brothers. And, then, as Dick had done, she inquired the intentions of the head of the firm so far as the younger brothers were concerned. He told her that they were returning, that a fresh start was to be made, and that he was looking to the future with a hopeful heart. She remained quiet for a moment, then in a breath she whispered: "Do you never think of yourself?"

Before he could reply, the cab stopped. He alighted, and glanced at his watch.

"It is not *very* late," he said entreatingly. "Will you——"

She smiled back at him, and held out her hand so that he might assist her from the cab.

"If Mori is awake I should love to give her Mr. Morrow's message," she said, but her eyes were more eloquent.

He dismissed the driver, and led the way through the garden to the hall door. The old housekeeper placed a crooked finger on her lips. Mori was asleep, but she had left a note, in which she requested to be awakened as soon as he returned. Robert handed the note to Margaret and laughed softly.

"Presently," he whispered—"presently." He opened the study door, and she followed him in.

"This belonged to Dick as much as to me," he said, and his voice was shaking because of her presence. "Shall I open the windows? Dick was never comfortable unless his pipe was burning."

"I love it," she said, with a smile that lit up her face. "I can almost see him sitting there," and she pointed to the chair opposite.

He followed her eyes, and nodded, slowly.

"There never was a man like Dick," he said, with a sigh. "It will be very lonely without him."

"You have Mori!" She loosened the fur around her neck; he took it from her and placed it on the couch.

"Yes, I have Mori," he said softly, "but time slips along so quickly that . . ." He shook himself, as though he didn't care to dwell on the subject. "If you stand here at the window," he said, brushing aside the curtain as he spoke, "you may see Mr. Drender's house on the other side of the river."

She left her chair and came to where he was standing.

"Mori blows you a kiss every night," he whispered, and again his lips failed him.

"I came to see Mori," she reminded him.

"Ah, yes!" he said absently, then looked again at the window. His courage came with the rush of the wind, just as it did that night at the gate of "Jarrow-side." The "Margaret! Oh, Margaret!" was full and bold before he wheeled from the curtains. The door of the study was standing slightly ajar; he stepped quickly across the floor and closed it. She was still standing by the window; her eyes wore a

startled expression, but not one of fear; her bosom was heaving with emotion; her hands were held out feebly, nervously. He stopped two paces from her and hung his head.

"Forgive me," he said dully. "It overcame me—just for the moment—I'm sorry—I've frightened you."

She opened her lips, and her voice was very sweet and tender.

"Frightened me! You!" She slipped her hand into his—his back was toward her. "Why should I be frightened? Mr. Morrow told me that you had something to say to me—something of great importance."

He raised his eyes.

"Dick said that? Why should he say that?"

"I believe he was thinking of Mori. . . . We talked a great deal about the child the last time he was at 'Jarrowside.'"

His big eyes were blinking pathetically.

"Help me," he said weakly.

"Mori is growing—in a little while she will become a young woman."

"I am going to send her away—to the Continent—soon."

"How lovely for her!"

"How lonely—for me!"

"And Dick said"—she might not have heard his sighing words—"that it was just now that she needed most the companionship of—of a woman. You understand—don't you? You can't always be with her. And I—I should dearly love to have her near me.

She might come so often to 'Jarrowside.' We'd—we'd share her, and——"

"Margaret!"—his lips were a-tremble; now he was holding both her hands—"Margaret, how you humble me!"

"Humble you! Humble you!" She half turned from him. "How can you say that?"

"I, who have brought so much sadness into your life——"

"Was it all sadness?" She was stronger than he—her words came with greater resolution, greater firmness.

"I broke your life, and yet you are here, in my lonely house, ready to—to——"

"Pity you in your loneliness."

Their eyes met; they read each other's mind. His face was set, tensely, but hers was soft and beaming with the light of forgiveness.

"Margaret, how I loved you!" And her head moved slightly forward till he was unable to see her face. "How I loved you in those dear dead days!" He crushed back the sobs that were choking him, and kissed her hair—kissed it almost roughly. She did not stir; it was as though for ten weary years she had been waiting for this moment, and dared not raise her eyes lest it should be unreal. "Margaret!" he cried again, and his voice was all broken with sobs, "no man ever loved a woman as I loved you."

"Loved me, Robert?"

"No, as I love you now—now," and he raised her head and compelled her to look him in the face. "Oh, Margaret, if only you could come back into my life!"

If only I could set back the universe and make you forget the dead years!"

"Not dead years, Robert," she murmured, again hiding her burning face against his breast. "There were the memories to live for, and I never—never wholly doubted you."

"Hush!" His cheek was resting against her bowed head. "Don't speak, Margaret, lest this should be what indeed it seems—a dream—the dream that has been with me for ten long years; the dream that has kept my eyes set toward the sun even when the shadows were most inviting."

"Poor Robert!" she whispered.

"No, not poor, Margaret, if this moment be real—if this is you I am holding to my heart."

"I have always been close to your heart, Robert—always."

"Even in the—the dark days?"

"Even in the darkest days."

"When you believed that I had wronged you?"

"You have never wittingly wronged anyone save yourself."

"I left you without a word—a word that might comfort you—might help you to understand."

"I understand, now—I have understood for some time."

He cried out as with pain; she felt his arms slide weakly from her shoulders.

"You—understand! You have understood for some time? Margaret!"

She lifted her head, and her hands crept lovingly around his neck.

"Robert"—her eyes were glistening in the soft glow of the lamp—"for many, many years I only guessed the truth——"

He closed his eyes, and reached for the hands that encircled his neck.

"Dick—Dick told you?"

"Told me what I already knew; told me only two days ago."

"God forgive you, Dick."

"Robert, you don't mean that?" And now the tears were racing down her cheeks. "Dick loves you. I never knew that one man could love another so dearly until I met him——"

"He gave me his word of honor——" His eyes were still closed; there was unutterable agony in every line of his face.

"Robert! Is his honor sullied because—because I know the truth?"

He opened his eyes, and they dwelt on hers.

"Margaret, how great you are!" he breathed.

"If only you had trusted me, there would have been no dead years, as you call them."

"I promised Jean—my poor broken-hearted Jean; and then—then there was the child to think of."

"Hush!" she said gently. "I know all that's passing in your mind—all that has passed through it. I know what you've suffered: Dick told me. Oh, if you had seen him two nights ago when he sought me out 'to ease an aching heart,' as he put it!"

"I understand, now, why he was so anxious to send me ashore. Oh! you great, big-hearted Dick. . . ."

And then, for the first time, he noticed the letter on the mantelshelf.

"He said that he had written to me——"

She reached for the letter and handed it to him. He read it aloud, the while Margaret remained standing by his side:

"MY DEAR OLD ROBERT.—I have broken the promise I gave you, because you sought to invest me with a silence that would mean the blighting of two lives. It is amazing to me, now, that I should have been here in England so long without discovering where your heart was buried. You big, foolish fellow! Did you think that I was going to stand idly by and watch you two steal like sad-faced ghosts into the evening of life, when a word of explanation was all that was required to make you happier than I ever hope to be?

"Robert MacWhinnie, you should go down on your knees and beg her forgiveness. Was she ever to be doubted? Do you really think that a woman so good as she is would bring one moment of pain into the life of my little darling, O Mori San? I dare not call you Quixotic, because you have been so extraordinarily rational in other matters—most other matters; but it is astounding that you should be prepared to set her great love on one side. It may be a trait of Scottish character—I cannot say. I meant to bring you two together again, even if it cost me the best friend I have ever known. Anyway, I am free from your displeasure, unless you take it into your head to charter a swifter vessel and catch us up.

"Go to her, man. The child needs her sympathy. And you need the sympathy of a woman like Margaret Drender. I am going back to Japan. I don't think I shall ever return. I am going to build a bungalow away up at Sendai. My heart is there—now; it has been there for ten years. My dear Robert, if you loved as I have loved, you would go to her in sackcloth and ashes, and you'd bow your head in humility.

"And, Robert, if you have any friendship left for me,

don't let my little sweetheart forget me. Tell her that Uncle Dick has gone back among the chrysanthemums and the lotus and that he's always thinking of her. And, Robert, I would like to think that if the world—the world you talked about that night—were unkind to my Mori, you would show her the way to sanctuary . . . here!"

The letter fluttered to the floor. For a moment he stood irresolute; then he held out his hands toward her.

"Do you forgive me?" he asked, in a breaking whisper.

And as she rested her head against his breast, as she had done a little while before, he tenderly stroked her hair as though he would efface the faint touches of gray.

"It has been a long, long night, sweetheart," he said, "but the gold of morning has come at last. I gave you pain—you whom I loved better than life itself—but God gave you strength and work to soften that pain." He paused; the sobs were back in his throat. "God gave me you to soften mine."

CHAPTER XV

THE PRODIGAL BROTHERS

THE two prodigals, Jamie and David, awaited their brother in the study, and Donald, the little father, was seated between them, nursing his hat on his knees and whiling away the time by recalling their many sins of omission. He had brought them back, as he might have brought two truants back to school, and although Robert's letter to them had been couched in the kindest terms, the old man would not allow them to derive any comfort or self-assurance from it.

"I canna say what ye expect"—and he wagged his head to and fro—"but if Robert were tae put ye each to a lathe, it wad be nae mair than ye desarved."

From several sources he had learned the truth about the dissolution of partnership; but what was more significant to his mind was the news that Robert was likely to become the son-in-law of John Drender. This was a moment when humility was not only meet, but advisable.

"Ye're two men," he told them, "and yet ye've behaved like a couple o' bairns. When I was your age, I was a marrit man wi' a family, an' recognized my responsibilities. Frae what I can see of it, the two of ye havena growed out of y'r babyhood yet. . . . And,

David, who valeted ye this morn, wi' y'r pink tie and pretty striped suitin'? A nice figure ye'll cut at a lathe, i' them duds. Not that Robert is like tae put ye to a lathe. I dinna see that ye can expect as much as that. Mebbe he'll keep ye runnin' errands in the yard for a while, just to knock the nonsense out o' ye. Now, when he comes in, let's hae no dour faces, and no pretendin' that ye're something that ye're not. Ye've had y'r lesson, and ye've paid for it—then dinna lose the benefit of it. Like as no, Robert'll be for gi'eing ye a good lacin'—and he's just the man tae do it. I canna think of aught that I might say for ye in mitigation, so if ye're turning over onything in y'r minds, best get it ready."

And then Robert came down the stairs. He came in with a rush, with a cheery: "Splendid, boys! I didn't expect you so early. There's nothing like beating the clock. And you, father! You're looking younger! How's Ballyhoustie, and mother, and all the old neighbors?"

He was wringing their hands, and capering about them as though he hadn't seen them for years, and had been longing all the while to meet them. The greeting was the reverse of what the brothers had expected, and they remained standing like two culprits come to judgment. They were waiting for sentence, for any leniency which he might be disposed to exercise, and this boisterous good humor only increased their nervousness. The little father tried to put them at their ease by assuring Robert that never in all his life had he come upon two more glaring instances of downright ingratitude and unappreciated chances.

"Robert, man," he said, "they're no expecting any fatted calf. I could tell ye what they deserve, but it wad tak' up too much time. The thing is, what are ye gaein' tae do wi' them?"

"Do?" Robert laughed. "It's already done. We're taking on fifty additional hands this morning, and I want you, Jamie, to go down and look them over. You will find MacGowan in the office. He's had his instructions, and he'll bring you up to date, as it were. You and I, David, are going over a couple of estimates together, and I should say that before noon we shall thoroughly understand each other."

David, having greater courage than his brother Jamie, raised his eyes to meet Robert's.

"You're heaping a deal of coals on our heads, Robert," he said sullenly.

"Ay, an' ye deserve it," chimed in the little father.

"We came here to accept any ultimatum that you might feel disposed to lay down."

"Ay, that ye did"—from Donald.

"We're men, Jamie and I, but I don't think that either of us had any sense of manhood until your letter came, a few days ago."

Robert dropped his hands on his brother's shoulders.

"What are you havoring about, David?" he said, with a laugh. "Didn't I tell you that if anything should go wrong on the Clyde—and I'm bound to confess that I was very apprehensive at the time—didn't I say that the old signboard would be up above the gates, and that I should welcome your return?"

"Two spoilt bairns," said the little man; but his de-

light at Robert's attitude showed itself in the dancing of his eyes. "Jamie, hae ye naethin' to say?"

"Nothing," said Jamie—"I haven't the strength to say anything, except this: we've had a bitter experience, and I think it will do us both good."

"That's right," said Robert, "and you're going to bring that experience to bear, so long as you are a member of the firm of MacWhinnie Brothers. Experience is more valuable than all the good intentions you might think of in a lifetime." He turned to his father. "You haven't said a word about Thomas. Where is he? I haven't set eyes on him since—since—— You know, I suppose."

"Dinna fash y'rsel' about Tammas," said the little man. "If I ken onything about human nature, he's tryin' to digest the porridge that I gave him for his supper the last time I set eyes on him. Tammas, by now, ought to be in sight of the west coast of Africky. He's gone out there tae preach Equality to the heathens, an' if I ken onything about heathens, Tammas will need tae do very little preachin'. . . . How's the wee maid, Robert?"

"Never better in her life," said Robert. "She's going away next month—going to a school in Germany. Miss Drender is going to take her, and you can well understand that the packing is a most important business. She'll be down presently, father. I told her last night that you were coming. You'll mark a wonderful change. A thorough little woman, and as brave as brave about the going away. But I know who'll suffer the most."

"Ay," said the little man. "Ye'll be awf'y lonely."

And he looked at Robert, as though he expected some news about Margaret.

Robert changed the subject.

"You'll find the place pretty much as when you left it," he said to Jamie. "I don't think you can do better than go down there at once, to get your bearings. We shall expect you back here to dinner to-night. Then we can talk about the future."

The little father looked from one to the other.

"Then ye're no gaein' tae put them on the lathes, Robert?"

"No," said Robert, laughing outright. "But"—the pause kept them very still—"I'm going to put them on the salary list."

Donald MacWhinnie sighed.

"That's the way, Rob," he said. "I was awf'y feared ye were gaein' tae put them back on the board. Did ye hear that, you two? Ye're on the salary list; and let me tell ye this: when ye're on the salary list ye hae to wor-rk, because if ye dinna wor-rk ye're soon off the salary list."

The two brothers went down to the works, leaving their father with Robert.

"Robert," said the little man, "I canna say onything. I feel like greetin'."

"Why should you say anything at all?" said Robert cheerily.

Donald passed a hand over his wrinkled forehead.

"Somethin' comes back into my mind same as it was said yesterday. It was when ye were a lad, an' y'r mither an' I were arguin' an' arguin' about what we should do for ye. And your mither—one of the grand-

est women that ever breathed, Robert, even if her tongue be a little sharp now an' then—ye'r mither was sayin' that she wondered if bairns were the blessing some wad hae ye believe. I mind her words: 'Ye gae through the Valley o' the Shadow,' she said, 'tae bring them into the wor-rld; ye work an' ye slave for them when they're bairns, and when they're growed up, they gae awa', the lassie wi' th' first laddie that sets his cap at her, an' th' laddie wi' th' first pair o' blue een that looks at him.' And I remember I said tae her: 'Tell me, Martha, how much has a parent a richt to expect frae her bairns?' . . . Ye'll no think me haverin', Robert?"

"No, father," said Robert. "I think that I thoroughly understand what is in your mind."

"I'm glad of it, Robert, because it'll save me sayin' a lot that mebbe I couldna say properly. We've expected mair than eno' frae ye, an' I suppose we shall gae on expectin' . . . an' gettin'. Man, ye hae me greeting. Sometimes, I've thought that we'd hae been happier if we'd kept tae the lathe—a' of us."

"I've tried to do my best to make you happy," said Robert gently.

"Of course ye hae. Ye've been tryin' all the while. Ye've never let up, an' it's no your fault that we havena been happy. Eh, Rob, if ye could hae seen y'r mither's face when I went hame a month ago an' told her the cottage was ready——"

"The cottage, father?"

"Ay. We've sold the house, and the main part o' the furniture. It was no for the likes o' we, Robert. Y'r mither was never happy in it. 'Gi'e me the cot-

tage, Donald,' she kept on sayin', 'where a body can lay her hands on what she wants.' Rob, man, she never left the cottage, in spirit, an' if ye'd seen her face that night when we got back, an' when she was settin' on the edge o' th' fender, ye'd hae known the meanin' o' real joy. It was like gaein' hame after bein' in the wilderness. Ay, we sold the house. I made a clear fifty on the deal, Robert. Y'r mither wad tell ye that she did it, but ye know what y'r mither is. And, look ye here: There's the balance o' the purchase money. I've paid for the cottage. It's ours. And we've sent Tammas and his wife abroad. There's the balance, Robert MacWhinnie, so dinna shake y'r heid an' say ye'll no tak' it. I'm as independent as ye are. But if in y'r hairt ye wad like tae do one thing for me, I'll be eternally grateful."

"Anything you like to ask, father!"

The old man lowered his voice to an anxious whisper.

"Hae ye got an old lathe in the shop that ye're no usin'? Now that we hae no bairns, the cottage is awf'y roomy, an' if I could hae a lathe awa' up in the attic where y'r mither couldna interrupt me, I could work out an idea o' mine that'll mean a fortune tae the man that puts it on the market."

Robert raised his hand.

"Mori's coming down the stairs," he said. . . .
"You shall have that lathe, father, even if I have to carry one up to Ballyhoustie on my back."

CHAPTER XVI

TO-MORROW

MORI had run ahead, and was across the lawn and halfway through the study window before Robert reached the gates of "Jarrow-side"; he heard her twang an imaginary samisen, heard a deep gruff Northumbrian voice cry out: "Come in, hinny!" and then—Margaret was by his side. She had been waiting among the laurels, and had allowed the child to slip past her.

"I'll call her back," she whispered, her fingers tightening on his. "I think—only think—that he has something very important to say to you. . . . Mr. Masters is going abroad—his health is not very good. . . . There! Go in quickly." She hurried him to the door, and called out: "Mori! Mori, darling!" The child came to her side at once, and she led her away into the garden.

Old John Drender was sitting with his back to the window, so that his face was in shadow when Robert hesitated on the threshold.

"Come in, MacWhinnie," said the old ironmaster. "It's a long time sin' I set eyes on ye. How's the work going? And have you had any more trouble with your men?"

"It's that I came to see you about, sir," said Robert, his cheeks aflame.

"Ay, ay." Mr. Drender pulled out his pipe. "Shut that door, MacWhinnie," he said, in a furtive way. "She's cut me down to three pipes an afternoon, as if a body could exist on that."

"You might buy a larger pipe, sir"—anxious to sustain the spirit of the moment.

"So I might. Never thought of it. There ye are, the brains of youth again. I must be getting old. . . . What's the news?"

Robert stirred uneasily.

"I came to thank you in person, sir," he began, but the old man checked him.

"Still on about that strike, MacWhinnie? Yesterday's gone."

"I shall never forget you for it, sir."

"Do you think I did it for ye, alone? . . . Got a match handy? . . . Nice thing if ye'd made a mess of it. 'One of John Drender's old apprentices'! That's what they would have said. I know 'em. Now, let's hear how you're fixed for the future. . . . They tell me ye've brought those brothers of yours back to the river. Ah, well, I can't find it in my heart to blame you! There's a deal of good in both of them, if you know how to bring it out."

"I'm certain of that, sir. David has already shown me that the engineer was hidden behind a little affection."

"A deal of good if you bring it out. Don't be too lavish with your praise, keep him in place, and give him a kick in the ribs once a fortnight—that's the way

to make a man of a snob. I like ye, Robert MacWhinnie. Ye've been doing some fine work on the Thames sin' ye came back. I wish I could find a man like ye to take Jim Masters' place. He's going away."

Robert made no comment.

"And I'm too old to go down there every day. Seems as though the old firm will have to drop out. . . . Ay"—Robert had opened his lips—"we might do worse, MacWhinnie. Amalgamation would mean putting younger blood into Drender and Masters, and more experience in MacWhinnie Brothers. We'll talk it over another time. . . . Do you see that bairn in the garden?"

Robert went to the door immediately and called to Mori; then he stole gently in the direction whence the child had come. The afternoon sun was sinking away, leaving a trail of gold on the face of the slow-moving river; the tide was turning, and a faint wind came whimpering from the sea.

Margaret asked no question; everything was to be read in his open face. And he asked no question of her. What John Drender knew—he knew, and . . . shrieks of childish laughter were pealing through the study window.

Near the gate, the lovers paused; his arms were around her as on that night ten years before. The twilight deepened; the breeze trailed a wisp of dark hair over her eyes; tenderly he brushed it away.

"Margaret" . . . he held her face between his hands . . . "something your father said—a moment ago——"

"Yes, Robert," she whispered, her eyes on his.

“ ‘Yesterday’s gone,’ he said.”

“Gone,” she murmured.

He stooped and kissed her.

“And thus—thus we await to-morrow.”

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